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The Editors
RONALD REAGAN'S
RED HERRING

ONE DOLLAR
FEBRUARY 12, 1982

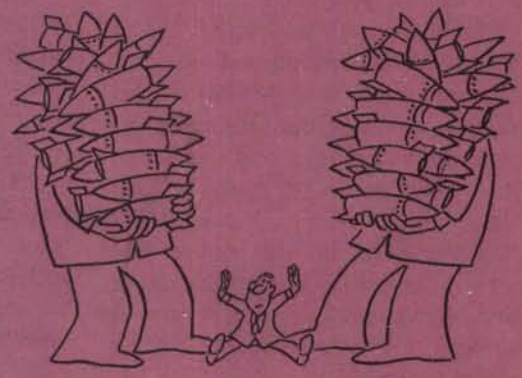
ABORTION: our readers respond

FACING MATTERS OF LIFE & DEATH

Why the pessimists never win
THOMAS POWERS

The necessity of nonviolence
JOHN GARVEY

The children send a message
JULES RABIN



ALSO: Michael Harrington on P.T. Bauer's third-world Reaganomics • Saul Maloff on Diana Trilling & Mrs. Harris • Colin L. Westerl[illegible] 'Ragtime'

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Correspondence

'Chariots' misfire

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editors: I'm not a film reviewer but if I were and I saw a French film, I shouldn't take pot shots at France and Frenchmen. I should keep to the matter at hand. Moreover, if I criticized the title I should make certain I knew what it meant.

Colin Westerbeck, Jr. reviewing *Chariots of Fire* [Dec. 4] starts his article — "It's such a pretentious title. What does it mean?"

If Mr. Westerbeck had listened to the hymn sung at the closing of the film during the memorial service (not funeral — another of Mr. W's "misunderstandings") for Harold Abrahams he surely would have recognized Blake's poem *Jerusalem* . . . "Oh clouds unfold! Bring me my chariot of fire." It's no wonder then that Mr. Westerbeck missed the point of the movie. Incidentally, Blake's poem is a plea for a more just society in England which in fact is the case today with the much maligned welfare state, unlike this country where the rich get richer and the poor poorer.

Frankly the sportsmanship of "the last flowers of Victorian England" is somewhat more to my taste than the footballers high on drugs and prone to inflict permanent bodily injury on their opponents, which passes for American sport today.

By the way, let me assure your readers—since Mr. Westerbeck didn't, being more engrossed in expressing his sociological opinions—that the acting in the film is superb.

JOAN M. COOPER

Black Atlantans

Atlanta, Ga.

To the Editors: Maynard Jackson's "do for blacks" attitude ["Clouds over Atlanta," by Roger M. Williams, Dec. 4] did cause many Atlantans to rate his two terms as mediocre, particularly those Atlanta whites who believed for the last eight years that city government should have "done" for them.

That it "did" for everyone, while insuring that the city's black majority got its share of service, contracts and patronage, made Maynard Jackson "great" in most black Atlantan's eyes.

JULIAN BOND
The State Senate

Jewish Atlantans

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editors: I was astounded that Roger M. Williams's "analysis" of the Atlanta mayorality race [Dec. 4] failed to mention, let alone discuss, Andrew Young's record as UN ambassador and his various initiatives to the P.L.O.

The perception by white Jewish voters of the Young record on Israel was surely a factor in the outpouring of Atlanta's Jewish community in favor of Sidney Marcus. Apparently, this fact which would have required analysis did not fit into Mr. Williams's simple "black/white" view of the Atlanta political scene.

ROBERT J. MILLER

Mother Teresa

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: The very sensitive discussion by Abigail McCarthy of Mother Teresa [Sept. 25] was a great contribution. As she so rightly emphasizes, the role of this servant of the poor is to build up the just and loving community in one particular and much-needed fashion. But this edification is not helped when people acclaim that one way as the only way or the best way. The example of Barbara Ward's structural efforts to address the roots of poverty is, as Ms. McCarthy notes, ample proof of the need of other ways.

(REV.) PETER J. HENRIOT, S.J.
Director, Center of Concern

Contest & context

Saint Louis, Mo.

To the Editors: In reviewing my *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness* in the October 9 *Commonweal.* Arthur L. Caplan gives the book a friendly but, necessarily, rather Procrustean treatment to fit it into a thematic mold which will accommodate the other three books he concurrently reviews. The main thrust of *Fighting for Life* is not to expiate on sociobiology. The book does use material from sociobiology as well as from what, with explicit caution, I call "noobiology" (the study of the biological underpinnings of mental activity). It does, moreover, note that human consciousness can by no means be reduced to biology, although on the other hand, our mental activity is more circumstantially related to biology than we have heretofore imagined.

But the book undertakes far more than an assessment of sociobiology. It undertakes to draw out of now readily available biological and psychological data, as well as out of human experience that we all share, some new explanations of significant features in human life related in often surprising ways to contest (which is not identical with aggression). It treats such matters as the relationship of combat to sexual identity, and especially to male insecurity, as well as reasons for the final effective demise in the 1960's of the agonistic structures (disputations, debates, teaching by thesis method, spelling bees) which had always governed academic life in the West from antiquity. The book looks into the ways in which shifting agonistic structures register in today's spectator sports, politics, business life, and Christian life and liturgy, coming finally to examine the role of contest in developing the deep and articulate interiorization of consciousness that

(Continued on page 95)

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MR. REAGAN CHANGES THE SUBJECT

ON JANUARY 20, President Reagan celebrated the end of his first year in office by attending a $10,000-a-table Republican dinner-dance. "The days of sensational, quick victories are mostly behind us," the president told his supporters. "Now we move from the glamour of initial commitment to the grit of the long haul."

We hope Mr. Reagan's friends can survive the loss of glamour, but we rather doubt that "the grit of the long haul" is going to burden them too heavily. It is the laid-off auto and steel workers, the working poor losing their supplementary welfare benefits, the victims of the crimes that inevitably follow from prolonged and deep youth unemployment, the several million citizens given just one more push toward despair by the loss of food stamps, the inhabitants of cities coping with crumbling public facilities — these are the Americans on whom Mr. Reagan is bestowing the grit of the long haul, not the well-heeled company assembled that evening in the Washington Hilton.

Our basic objection to the Reagan economic policies is that they are unfair. Given the uncertainty prevailing in economic thought these days, it is harder to say with quite the same assurance that they won't work. But that very uncertainty militates against a program that takes from the poor and gives to the rich, that tosses out social welfare to make room for military spending. As long as there are equally plausible paths to economic recovery, it is wrong to choose one that presents the bill for economic transformation to the poor and those barely getting by. It is doubly wrong when the chosen path, even allowing for the disarray in economic theory, does not itself appear very plausible.

"Voodoo economics" George Bush called it, and very aptly too because Reaganomics, like voodoo, was supposed to work through the psychology of those at whom the magic was aimed. Braced by both immediate and promised tax breaks, spending cuts, and deregulation, business would bet on a cheery future by increasing investment, productivity, and jobs *now* — quickly producing, among other things, the revenues necessary to pay for a huge boost in military expenditures (and thereby offsetting the inflationary pressures of the Pentagon budget). So far, the promise of well over $100 billion in corporate tax breaks between now and 1986, plus parallel reductions in higher-bracket personal income taxes, has produced *no* additional capital spending by business. Productivity rose a bit and has recently taken another sharp dip. Unemployment is hitting new highs, almost nine percent. Manufacturers are operating at 73 percent of capacity, down from 80 percent a year ago and 86 percent in 1979. With interest rates at current levels, investing in government bonds is more attractive than adding to already idle plant capacity. The towering national debt that supposedly necessitated all those sacrifices by poorer Americans is now scheduled to shoot a few more miles into the stratosphere.

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President Reagan's response to all this in his State of the Union message was, first, to blame it on Jimmy Carter and "the inheritance of decades." Then he changed the subject. Instead of a Trojan horse, this time he dragged out a red herring — the "new federalism" scheme which, whatever its merits (and they appear to be few), will not solve the basic problems of the economy. The president delivered his message in the usual masterly style, although slipping into two moments of venom — one when he conjured up exploded myths of widespread fraud among food-stamp recipients, the other when he referred to investigations of Medicaid fraud without mentioning that the perpetrators were doctors and clinics and not Medicaid users, who were even more victimized than the taxpayers. The only winners one could identify in the president's message were (a) those collecting interest on government borrowing, now the fastest growing portion of the federal budget; (b) the military; and (c) corporations which will be able to take advantage of the welfare disparities between states resulting from the "new federalism." The losers will be . . . the usual.

The bottom line of the president's message was, as before, that there is no alternative. This is untrue.

To reduce the deficit: Cancel the third year of the Reagan tax cut. Schedule tax increases for 1984 when indexing against bracket creep goes into effect. Put a new tax on imported oil, as John Anderson and others (including us) proposed long ago, and which the president can do without congressional approval. Put a windfall profits tax on domestic natural gas, which will profit, under decontrol, from the monopoly power of OPEC in the energy field. Drop the B-1, the MX, the supercarriers, and a number of other questionable military projects.

To encourage savings: Eliminate the tax deductibility for at least some forms of consumer and mortgage interests. Consider various subsidies for savings or uses of a value-added tax that have been proposed here and abroad in order to promote savings across the entire income spectrum.

To increase productivity: Investment alone will not solve America's productivity problems; capital allocation is as important as capital formation. (Investment has, in fact, been going up while productivity has been going down.) Develop an industrial policy, using government to support crucial research and development, to guide investment toward areas of greater productivity, and to facilitate the transformation of declining industries. Invest in the society's human resources through education and programs to train skilled workers.

To reduce unemployment and inflation: Reverse the shocking and self-defeating deterioration of public facilities by genuinely "supply-side" investments in public works. Develop a sensible price-and-incomes policy, possibly employing temporary controls plus a system of tax incentives for settlements linked to productivity gains.

There are plenty of alternatives to be explored — once the country escapes from the anti-government ideological straitjacket that seems to bind the United States alone among industrial nations (or rather the U.S. and Mrs. Thatcher's United Kingdom as well, with striking results). That it is stubborn doctrine, not facts, which guides the president was revealed in the casual way he bungled the latter at the press conference held a week before the State of the Union address. Watching Reagan perform, Charles Peters, editor of the *Washington Monthly,* was moved to write, "He is a pleasant, lazy, superficial man whose policies have produced a recession that could very easily and very quickly turn into something much worse." But Mr. Reagan at least has the courage of his convictions. If his opponents would manifest as much outspokenness, they would be heard. It is one year since Ronald Reagan took office and fifty since Franklin Delano Roosevelt did; despite the current maligning of the New Deal, by Reagan among others, a recent poll shows that Americans have a far higher opinion of FDR than they do of Ronald Reagan. And they have every reason to.

Report from Britain

NOT BREAD BUT STONES

THE U.K.'s BANKRUPT PARTIES

NOBODY IS LIKELY to deny that, in common with most of the Western democracies, Britain is in a mess. But it is not just, or even primarily, the economic mess that matters. On the contrary, the mess is to be seen in the primacy that everyone is giving to the economic blight, and not to the despair that underlies it. Resort to the renewal of the cold war, and to the so-called modernization of the mass-destruction weapons that goes with it, is the most significant symptom of this despair. A misnamed appeal to "security" is a sure sign of the bankruptcy of the society which makes it.

It is being said in some circles that, with the forging of the alliance between the Liberal party and the new Social Democratic party, a new era of political hope is dawning. You don't have to be an uncritical admirer of either the Labor party or the Conservatives to see that this hope is a mirage.

The government clearly has no answer to the mess, except that we must go on with it simply because having got this far we can't turn back. The most notable thing about the leadership of Mrs. Thatcher, apart from the remarkable doggedness that characterizes it (and it is precisely doggedness: one cannot properly call it courage or even resolution) is its lack of any spark of vision. The light we are promised at the end of this particular tunnel is pretty dim and smoky: if we are lucky, we shall emerge into a misty world of material sufficiency (one could not call it prosperity or even plenty) based on replacing steel and steam engines with micro-processors and plastics. What this is all *for,* what this interlude of poverty and misery is all aiming at, is hardly ever spelled out, except negatively. It is certainly not designed to make the world more equitable, the British less insular, the pile-up of mass-destruction weapons less awesome. It is not a more friendly, warm-hearted or

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generous society that we are invited to join, but on the contrary one which is more selfish, harsh, and self-seeking. The rhetoric of Thatcherism, the medium in which the message is broadcast, the voice itself (arrogant, monotonous, and sarcastic) all point in this direction.

Overwhelmingly, I think, we are asking for bread and being given stones—some of which are of flint and others ruby, but all useless for the purposes of nourishment. This is the significance of the protests of the "wets" like Messrs. St. John Stevas and Ian Gilmour. The essence of the former's rebellion, and the prime cause of his being sacked from the cabinet, was his appeal to the values he sees enshrined in the Tory tradition of Disraeli and Lord Ashley. Disraeli, after all, was the man who coined the phrase "the two nations"—i.e., the rich and the poor in the eighteen forties, and saw himself as the prophet of a Toryism with a "vision" of a single nation. However far from the present reality this vision may have been, Mr. St. John Stevas has at least understood that some kind of imagination, some appeal to the better instincts of people, is required if policies of retrenchment and suffering are to succeed. One of the crucial elements in any such vision must be the readiness of those with money and influence to take their share, which must be a lion's share, of the sacrifices. It is this truth that Thatcherism has quite failed to grasp.

Living in Birmingham, I have talked to a good many people involved in the recent exercise in brinkmanship during the potentially disastrous confrontation at the state-owned British Leyland automobile manufacturing company. "Moderates" and "militants" on the trade union side all seem agreed on one thing, which may not have been of crucial economic importance, but was of very great psychological significance. This was the fact that Michael Edwardes, the man appointed to run British Leyland because of his tough "leadership," had taken a very hefty pay increase himself at the very time when the workers were being asked to accept 3.8 percent during an inflation of at least 11 percent. No amount of explaining had any effect. And quite right too. This is precisely what "leadership" means: understanding the symbolic, as well as the cash, value of behavior; recognizing that there are powerful, even determining factors at work in a society other than the bonus scheme and the length of tea breaks.

But if Thatcherism is morally bankrupt, it seems to me that the other options are not much better. The Labor party, or rather that part of it which is loyal to the leader Michael Foot, is made up of able but hardly impressive people. Foot himself is too decent a man to be a great party leader. The recent incident when he went to a "Remembrance" ceremony, in honor of the dead of recent wars, in a duffle-coat instead of the usual black outfit (he wore a black suit under it, however) is characteristic. For the awkward fact is that Remembrance days—and here I am treading on some very sensitive ground—are full of national hypocrisies. They have become occasions for unctuous self-congratulation. Syrupy commentators on the television describe the gorgeous get-ups of the chaps in uniform as they parade past the cenotaph in Whitehall, but they never mention what some of these people are actually doing the rest of the time—for example prowling round, with their nuclear tubes at the ready, to do their genocidal "duty" if told.

Michael Foot's clumsy attempt at puncturing some of this unctuousness, and appearing in public as a human being, had the effect (whether intentionally or accidentally I don't know) of upsetting the balance of truth and falsehood on which this particular institution rests. It is characteristic of our present condition, that the *guts* of the old Remembrance day, namely the one-minute (later two-minute) silence in which the whole nation simultaneously took part, has been cut out, so that only the empty shell of a parade is left. The one-minute silences that I recall in my childhood were moments of impressive unity: it is typical of our present discontents that nobody has thought to reintroduce them, or replace them with anything better.

Mr. Benn's brand of leadership is more interesting, but not (to my mind) any more acceptable. This is not just because he would make members of Parliament into mere vote-fodder. It is also because his own 'vision' is as narrowly nationalist as Enoch Powell's with a conception of national sovereignty which makes change almost impossible. What is wrong with the Common Market, apparently, is simply that it infringes the eternal right of the British Parliament to have the final say on everything. The possibility that this form of nationalism might need modification in the interests of a larger unity seems to be ruled out. Bennism is essentially a parochial affair; and its unilateralism as well as its anti-marketeering are of this sort.

But if this is so, the new "Alliance" seems to me no better: it is simply the obverse of Bennism. A woolly adherence to the EEC for mostly commercial reasons, combined with an equal adherence to another outdated concept: NATO as eternal. Benn has at least grasped that the ordinary political activist is no longer prepared to slog his guts out in his local constituency if the moment his party gets into power the ideas he has worked for are discarded. The old, half-blind emotional loyalty is no longer there. But it is no answer to this problem to work people up, as the SDP has done, into a frenzy of enthusiasm for a set of policies that add up to nothing at all.

It is an amazing thought that the nearest thing we have to a genuine political leader—that is, someone with both a touch of vision and the practical understanding of power—is the former Conservative prime minister Ted Heath! For practical purposes, he is now a transcendent non-party figure; standing for the anti-Thatcherite proposition that there are always alternatives to choose from and that therefore it is up to people to choose the direction they want to go in. But Heath has one major disadvantage, given the current mood of those who are looking for something different from what we have now. This is that he does not actively connect the two ends of the one string which holds together the vital forces of hope and change: I mean, on the one hand what may be called the Brandt Report transnational view of the world, and on the other the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament vision of a mankind decisively repudiating the strategy of mass suicide. It is this combination which needs to be harnessed politically in Britain at the present time. Nobody on the current scene looks like achieving it. That is the measure of the mess we are in. BRIAN WICKER

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Of several minds: *Thomas Powers*

THE POWER OF WORDS

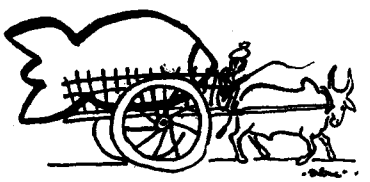
WHY PESSIMISTS SCARE US, NOT CHANGE US

In my youthful way I wondered, "If only some day a hundred years from now, a little street or even an alley could be named after me."

Stanislaw Ulam,
Adventures of a Mathematician (1976).

IT IS TIME that gives power to words. There is no street named after Ulam, but the day may still come. Ulam, a Polish mathematician who came to the United States shortly before World War II, has spent most of his life at Los Alamos.There, in the early 1950s, he hit upon a clever way to create the temperatures — hot as the center of the sun — necessary for thermonuclear explosions. Oppenheimer once referred to Ulam's idea as "technically sweet." The phrase seemed innocent enough at the time. The consequences of Ulam's idea are certainly on a scale to justify naming a street after him, perhaps a whole plaza.

People have been talking about nuclear weapons for some time now. As early as 1921 the Austrian nuclear physicist Hans Thirring, brooding on the implications of Einstein's theories, wondered what "might happen in a town, if the dormant energy of a single brick were to be let free, say in the form of an explosion." Now we know. In the same decade Winston Churchill, possibly spurred by H.G. Wells, speculated about future wars using intercontinental missiles with warheads of tremendous force. Now, fifty years later, when the great powers have thousands of such weapons, Churchill's idle wondering has taken on a prophetic cast. "Now we are in for trouble," said Oppenheimer back in the spring of 1945, after he had been appointed to the Interim Committee set up to advise Truman about the bomb. Think of the resonance which time has given to that word "trouble."



"Why didn't I believe in the success of your work? If we had had this weapon in 1939, we would never have had this war. Now and in the future, Europe and the world are too small for a war. With such weapons available war will become unbearable for the human race."

Adolf Hitler to Walter Dornberger,
chief of the German V-2 rocket
program, in July 1943.

TIME WILL TELL us the meaning of Hitler's words. He probably intended to say that the potential scale of war in the future would prevent it from taking place. We all hope this will prove to be the case. But perhaps the real meaning is that we won't be able to "bear" such a war when it comes. Then again, we might "bear" it — more or less — and Hitler's remark will take on a tinge of irony. It's too soon to tell. In one sense his remark is already ironic. He died without knowing about the bomb.

There has been no shortage of warnings about that. It will take gall to plead ignorance when the time comes. Even before Hiroshima the men who made the bomb were beginning to have second thoughts, especially at the Met Lab in Chicago. But the mood of war was too strong. Pity found no place in the hearts of the men managing the war. We had been the victims of atrocities and did not shrink from inflicting them on our enemies. Thousand-plane raids had destroyed whole cities. Now one plane could do the job. What was the difference?

I once hit a kid in school. It was a slap, really, but it landed solidly and hard. All the anger drained out through my arm and hand. I remember the sensation vividly. It left me at peace within. Nagasaki seems to have had some such effect in Washington. Japan had not yet surrendered but Truman issued orders that no more bombs were to be dropped. The nuclear core for a fourth was being assembled at that very moment in Los Alamos. In the bomb-making community Nagasaki dissipated the mood of war overnight. Hiroshima could pass muster as a military act, but Nagasaki seemed gratuitous, vindictive, and vengeful. Warnings began to pour forth from the alarmed scientists. "The bomb changed everything — everything," said Einstein, "except our modes of thinking."

"Mr. Byrnes's . . . view [was] that our possessing and demonstrating the bomb would make Russia more manageable in Europe."

Leo Szilard, the physicist,
describing a meeting with
James Byrnes in May 1945

MR. BYRNES was wrong. Of course nobody can guess right every time, but even allowing for normal human error, the postwar military and political leaders of the United States seem to have got things wrong with uncanny persistence. The bomb, conceived as a weapon pure and simple so long as it belonged to us alone, had no apparent effect on Stalin at all. The Americans found this disconcerting. He seemed to dismiss it out of hand. After the first Russian bomb was detonated in August, 1949, the United States embarked on a crash program to build the H-bomb. It was then that Stanislaw Ulam earned his right to a street. But the Russians were right behind us, and it has been that way ever since. The arms race has been a continually escalating spiral for nearly forty years, but neither side has gained a useful political advantage, much less one on a scale proportionate to the growing risk. Our relations with the Soviet Union now are pretty much what they were in the early 1950s, with the sole exception that now we have

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thousands of nuclear weapons with which to threaten them, instead of hundreds.

The curious thing is that this came as no surprise to the alarmed atomic scientists of the late 1940s. Even before the end of the war a group at the Chicago Met Lab warned there would be such an arms race in the absence of international agreement. One result of their warnings was the Acheson-Lilienthal plan of 1946, presented to the UN — after certain modifications — by Bernard Baruch on June 14th of that year. He opened by saying, "We are here to make a choice between the quick and the dead. . . . Let us not deceive ourselves: we must elect world peace, or world destruction." The plan probably had small chance of success even in its original form; Baruch's modifications settled the matter. The Russians rejected it. The arms race so often predicted duly followed.

Postwar history might be described as a contest of competing predictions. One group said these weapons were too dangerous for the old international structure which accepted war as a last resort. They predicted disaster if we continued on our present course. A second group promised security through arms. In a letter to Eisenhower on February 6, 1956, Baruch said, "Whether we can get the 1500-mile [rocket] or the 5000-mile first, I do not know, but we should try for both. Whoever gets either one first will have the world by the tail with a downpull." That is a flat prediction. As it happened we got both first, but we did not get the world by the tail. Baruch's words sound hollow now.

It has to be asked why one group of predictions — for the most part accurate — has been ignored, while the failure of another group seems to have had so little effect. It is a curious business. One answer is that while the pessimists foresaw many things which have come to pass, their worst fears are not among them. We have had no war. In the late 1940s the pessimists seem to have seen everything in one blinding flash — a world armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons atop mighty missiles, engaged in a kind of pushbutton Buck Rogers war. They warned that others would soon build bombs, there would be no defense, America would have to disperse her cities.

In 1945 the science fiction writer Robert Heinlein predicted that Americans would have to school themselves in woodcraft and prepare to take to the wilderness in the event of nuclear war. His vision of the post-attack world was grim in the extreme — total collapse of communications, transportation, medical services, industry, the capacity of the government to govern. It reads a good deal like a study done in 1975 by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment. Heinlein had got it about right, but he was premature. So it was with other pessimists. The level of arms they foresaw took years to come to pass. We have not even quite reached the Buck Rogers stage yet, but it is no longer far off. It used to take hours to retarget a Minuteman missile, for example. Now it can be done by punching numbers into a computer. If the MX system is ever built the missiles will be able to retarget themselves. They will conduct a kind of perpetual electronic conversation, keeping up with their fellows. If some are destroyed, the rest will reallocate the most important targets. But this may not arrive until 1990, nearly half a century after the pessimists first saw it coming.

And of course there has been no war. The arms group claims it is fear which has done the trick. The Soviets know what war will mean, they say, and it has made them sober and cautious. Without nuclear weapons we would have gone to war over Berlin in 1948, or over Cuba in 1962. Maybe so, and maybe not. My own view is that war is not something we launch deliberately, but something which happens to us. We move toward it at a glacial pace, responding to events. Accident, or fate, chooses the precise circumstances of the opening shot. Preparation for war determines the sort of war it will be. Nations fight with the weapons they *have*. But that is my view, and it is only an opinion. Others have their opinions. Only events can establish, after the fact, which was closest to the truth.

There is also another reason the pessimists have had so little effect on anything except our nightmares. Everyone — just about everyone — concedes that nuclear weapons are dangerous. But what are we to do about it? International agreements to limit arms seem to offer the only way out, so we have been trying to negotiate limits. It is a slow process. There is not much to show for it. We must keep on trying. But what do we do in the interim? From the point of view of both Moscow and Washington, "the other side" is building more weapons. "We" can't afford to fall behind. The pessimists predict disaster in the future, while we have got to decide what to ask for in the defense budget today. We go on building weapons today, and make plans to negotiate limits tomorrow, and allow ourselves to hope, encouraged by years of relative peace, that things will go on no worse than they have.

"If atomic bombs are to be added as new weapons to the arsenals of a warring world, or to the arsenals of nations preparing for war, then the time will come when mankind will curse the names of Los Alamos and Hiroshima."

Oppenheimer in a speech
accepting an award at
Los Alamos on October 16, 1945

THAT IS a flat prediction. The time of which Oppenheimer spoke has not yet come. Last year I read an interesting book by Horace Freeland Judson called *The Search for Solutions*. It is an imaginative investigation of the scientific method. In it Judson writes that the best confirmation of a scientific theory is a "strong prediction" which is borne out by observation. In his theory of relativity, for example, Einstein predicted that the gravitational effect of stars would bend light rays. Experiment showed it was so. This "strong prediction" — a flat, confident statement that something would happen, based on a theory — convinced the doubters of relativity.

It will be the same with the predictions of Oppenheimer and so many others. Their theory is a simple one, although I have never seen it laid out in so many words. It is that preparation for war leads to war. If nations are ready for war and constantly push and test each other, even-

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tually things will slip out of their control and war will follow. This view of war as a characteristic and habitual form of human behavior directly contradicts the more hopeful view of the national security establishment. There war is seen as something which needlessly follows when the soldiers and statesmen haven't done their job right. It is a bit as if a basketball team insisted they could keep the ball in the air forever, if they were only serious enough about the effort, kept in training, and regularly rotated players. Common sense says someone would eventually drop the ball. The national security establishment insists it will never drop the ball, so long as we provide them with money, men, and arms, don't overreach, and soberly warn our opponents of the consequences if they push too hard.

The warnings issued by the pessimists have been frequent, cogent, eloquent and persuasive — so it seems to me — but they have had little effect on anything except the rhetoric of national leaders. Everyone pays lip service to arms control and "peace," but that is as far as it goes. The pessimists' words elicit fear, but are too weak to achieve that final degree of conviction which might make them the basis of action. The problem seems to be that they still constitute no more than a theory, and others have other theories. As time goes by without a nuclear war, the national security community seems to be confirmed in its theory, summed up by the Roman military writer Vegetius, who said, "If you want peace, prepare for war." Every passing year strengthens their position. In fact, they tend to think the proof is already in, and the case closed.

Of course the Romans had wars in plenty in spite of their preparations, but this is only a debater's point and it lacks the power to convince. Perhaps we should see the postwar world as a kind of laboratory, engaged in a major experiment to test the theories of the pessimists and those who trust in arms. Both have made strong predictions. Eventually one or the other will be in a position to say they told us so. In this light the pessimists may properly see themselves as arguing before two audiences simultaneously — their contemporaries, whom they hope to warn in time, and the postwar survivors of the future, who will be in a position to test prewar theories against reality.

". . . the most ominous thing about these wars is that they were not isolated or unprecedented calamities. They were two wars in a series; and when we envisage the whole series in a synoptic view, we discover that this is not only a series but a progression. In our recent Western history war has been following war in an ascending order of intensity; and today it is already apparent that the war of 1939-45 was not the climax of this crescendo movement."

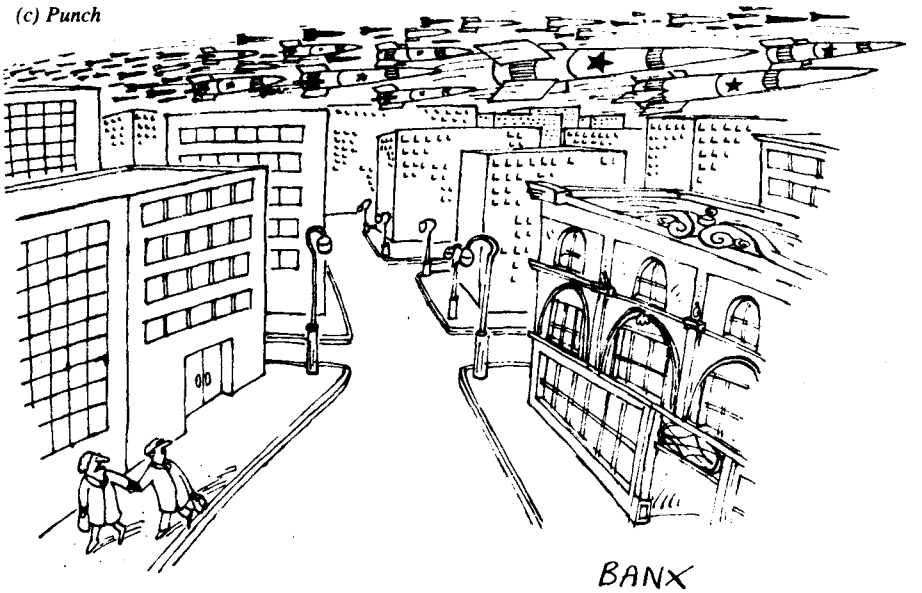
Arnold Toynbee,
War and Civilization (1950)

IN ANCIENT TIMES the gift of prophecy was held in something close to religious awe. It's not hard to see why. Events rarely spring out of nowhere. Once things have happened, their origins are usually clear. Thus the future is always hidden in the present, and yet it eludes us. Economists, stock analysts, and the Central Intelligence Agency all forecast the future in language as obscure as the pronouncements of the Delphic Oracle. This is not coyness, but a healthy instinct for professional self-preservation. Getting things generally right is a major achievement. Getting them *exactly* right is close to miraculous, and it doesn't often happen. Even science, which bases its predictions on an understanding of the structure of things, has about it an awesome quality inspiring trust. Thus the pessimists' warnings, merely persuasive as argument now, will acquire a new authority when borne out by events.

What the pessimists say is that nuclear weapons do not preclude a big war, and that when a big war comes nuclear weapons will be used in it. But that is as far as they go. What sort of war, when, how it will start, who will fight it — these things are all hidden from them. The question of nuclear war is sometimes posed in very stark terms, as if there were only two possibilities: the sort of armed peace we have had since 1945, or Armageddon — a cataclysm involving thousands of warheads, leaving the Northern Hemisphere a kind of smoking ruin, with a pitiful remnant of ragged survivors left to sift the debris. Things might turn out that way — there are weapons enough, certainly — but they might not.

War may come again not once but many times. Nuclear weapons may be used in Europe, or in the Middle East, or between Pakistan and India. They may wreck the world, or only a part of it, or only a city or two. When it comes we

(c) Punch



"Come on, Brian– don't let's get involved."

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shall be surprised. Those who argue the matter afterwards will still tend to divide along the old lines. One group will say that these weapons threaten, not protect us. If we have them, we will eventually use them. Their opponents will insist the case was a special one, that a change in strategy here, the rewording of a diplomatic note there, might have made all the difference. The evidence is certain to be fragmentary. The senselessness of the episode will make it seem like a kind of accident. The argument will not be settled dramatically and all at once. But if the pessimists can state their case clearly enough in advance — refining the terms of the experiment, if you will — then gradually events will confirm the authority of what they say, and men will begin to listen.

THOMAS POWERS

Of several minds: *John Garvey*

NECESSARY NONVIOLENCE

IT HAS PROBLEMS, BUT WHAT DOESN'T?

IN A RECENT editorial *Commonweal*'s editors praised the many bishops who have spoken about the need to end the arms race, but dissociated *Commonweal* from the pacifist position. I don't like the word "pacifist." It implies, as it shouldn't, the willingness to let anything terrible happen without any opposition. The word "nonviolence" isn't much better. I wish we had other words, less negative ones, for what nonviolence is. The word "peace" has been used so badly that to be pro-peace doesn't mean much; both Reagan and Brezhnev would claim to be in favor of peace.

Gandhi's word was *satyagraha*, "truth force." He said that it would be better for people to stand up violently than not to stand up at all, and then came down on the side of nonviolence. There are problems with pacifism, or nonviolence, or whatever you want to call it; there are problems with everything. But there are many more problems with the acceptance — even the tentative, heavily qualified acceptance — of violence as a means to the end of securing justice, and those problems become particularly acute for Christians.

The assumption made by defenders of violence is that nonviolent resistance is impractical and doesn't work, which implies that violence does, or at least that it is ordinarily more effective. Nonviolent resistance has its victories, however, and the history of warlike solutions is hardly a history of stunning successes. Would the independence of India have been more firmly secured if violent rather than nonviolent means had been employed? Would violent resistance to Nazism by the Danes have saved more Jews than the remarkably effective nonviolent resistance which, in fact, saved nearly all of Denmark's Jews from extermination?

The reason nonviolence is not seriously urged on us by any of the various institutions responsible for educating us is, I suspect, that the refusal involved in nonviolence is too profoundly threatening to too many cherished institutions, most of all the state. Nonviolent resistance assumes that an individual has not only a right but sometimes even a duty to refuse obedience or allegiance to someone, or some institution, which claims authority over him. Violence between nations helps to preserve the belief that we are made safe by an identification with the state, which is seen as our security. And the perverse moralism which is an inevitable part of war allows us to assume that our side is virtuous while their side is evil. We are good, or at least represent good, while their side is evil, or at least a representative of evil. The state insists that we divide the world into an *us* and a *them*.

But isn't our system better than theirs? Americans are certainly more free than most people have been in history; almost any "them" will suffer by comparison. But two things must be said here. One is that we should not thank the state for our freedom. In a recent *New Yorker* article Jane Kramer wrote of resistance to the Hungarian government, "Dissidents say, simply, that it is humiliating for a man or a woman to be grateful to the state for whatever liberty the state allows." That is true here as well. Our governmental system tries in many of its laws to embody the traditions of freedom from authoritarian interference which go back to the Magna Carta and beyond, but we should not therefore be grateful to the state; we should instead be watchful, to make sure that the state doesn't try to limit or remove those freedoms. There is something craven and dishonest in the argument that the state protects my right to dissent, and therefore I should not dissent. My right to dissent matters more than the existence of the state, and I should not be grateful when the state refrains from suppressing dissent, any more than I should be grateful to my neighbor for not abusing my children.

The other thing which must be said is that while we are more free than most nations, within our borders, the government supports regimes which crush the freedom of other people. To protest the suppression of freedom in Poland is correct — but we must be equally outraged over the suppression of freedom in South Africa, Argentina, and El Salvador. Many more people have died at the hands of a regime which our government supports in El Salvador than have died in Poland; torture is a common tactic for many of our allies. But the state is always selectively indignant, because it must make alliances, and the enemy's enemy is always a friend, however evil.

Christians can't buy into this morality. Whatever is done to the least human being is done to Christ. This is as true in El Salvador as it is in Poland. We can't allow any government to include us in its "us." Apart from the fact that my enemy must be as much Christ to me as my neighbor is, there is another problem with what war demands. No government's army can allow its orders to be seriously questioned. A soldier must sur-

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render moral judgment to his superiors. The one recognized exception is the case of the obvious war crime; but here a soldier must hope that his refusal to obey will be vindicated by higher authorities, and he may not question the direction of the war itself. I don't believe that anyone can surrender conscience to that extent.

The arms race and the near-certainty of eventual nuclear war put the burden of proof on non-pacifists. True, mutually assured destruction or even the risk of a more limited nuclear war may frighten our leaders into sanity or at least restraint; but the odds are against that. The history of war is a history of miscalculations made by leaders who were very sure of themselves, just as ours are. The beginning of sanity is to be found in the rejection of their logic. We have to view this issue as the abolitionists viewed slavery: a limited nuclear defense is no more acceptable than a little slavery. The reality of nuclear war will be Hiroshima and Nagasaki multiplied next time by many more cities, many millions of burned children, tens of millions of slow deaths. In a recent *Newsweek* column George Will, chiding the Catholic bishops for their opposition to the arms race, compared what might happen in a limited nuclear war to what happened at Dresden and said that, awful as it was, the firebombing of Dresden wasn't really the end of everything. But maybe in a sense it was: when you can accept the massive destruction of civilian life as a legitimate tactic you have passed an important and terrible barrier. *Anything* is permitted now. And of course a limited nuclear war would not stop at what happened to Dresden or Hiroshima. We cannot yet imagine what the limits of a nuclear war might be. It ought to be clear that if Japan had had the atomic bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki would have been followed by Seattle and Portland.

Wars today cannot be limited to the battlefield, and in any serious confrontation the temptation to use nuclear weapons will be great. We do not yet have the courage to imagine what the result will be if the temptation becomes overwhelming.

There are problems, of course, with nonviolence. Would it be right, for example, to refrain from assassinating a Hitler? Assassination makes more sense than war, after all; it goes right to the heart of the problem. (Mention this and a lot of people laugh nervously, as if assassination were more shocking than war. The mythology which sustains war is so strong that it bothers people less to contemplate the slaughter of a generation than the killing of the leader who sent that generation out to die. The people who make war are the safest people in the world, and they should not be.) All of us can imagine situations in which violence seems to be less evil than its alternative. However, even the violence which might rid the world of a Hitler or an Idi Amin involves evil. To kill another is never a good thing; the one who dies would not exist if he had not been loved from before the beginning of time. If Hitler violated the image of God in himself, it was nevertheless real; no one has the power to cancel that reality, and any murder, even of an evil man, involves the killer in a mystery of evil. And perhaps such involvements may prove to be compelling. Bonhoeffer found it necessary to involve himself in just such an attempt, and I cannot say that he was wrong to have done so. His action was better than the interpretation of nonviolence which would leave a Hitler in power, facing no resistance. The purity which allows a Hitler to reign isn't pure at all; it is better to involve oneself in the mystery of evil, in fear and trembling.

But this is a long way from the spirit of the sort of moral theology many of us grew up on, which found extenuating circumstances for nearly every warlike action and waved away the notion that a person ought to feel contaminated even by necessary violence. What we need is a defense of the idea of necessary evil:

some things may be both necessary, and truly evil. Some early church canons seem to have had something like this idea in mind. They said that a person who shed blood, even in self-defense, had to refrain from the Eucharist for a period of several years. This spirit is a long way from the one found in Cardinal Cooke's message to the chaplains, which finds the state's preparation for the destruction of whole civilian populations acceptable, so long as it is agreed that the government will never really do it. (We're only trying to scare you, Russia; just kidding.)

One of the best things about the anti-arms race statements of the bishops is that they are not at all legalistic. They are clearly pastoral, and come from prayer and personal experience, from visiting anti-war people in jail, and from considering the presence of large war-related industries in the towns the bishops have been called to serve. This absence of legalism is refreshing and important. I have known Catholic pacifists who say that service in the army should simply be declared a sin. Though it would be a sin for me, that sort of statement, applied to anything — even where it is as objectively terrible as killing — seems wrong to me, and I realized why when I met a young Amish woman whose husband was doing alternative service during the war in Vietnam. When I told her that I was a conscientious objector she was baffled. Her husband was doing what he was doing only because his religion demanded it, and they found it a damned nuisance. She said she couldn't understand why a Catholic would ever bother with it. For her the refusal to be part of an army was not at all a reflection of the spirit of the Gospel, but a bit of irritating obedience to churchly legislation. I am sure that this is not the way it is for all of the Amish, but the encounter helped me to see that legalism does kill the spirit, and that the truths you try to live by must be discovered personally, and cannot be imposed. It is wonderful to see that a number of our bishops are responding to their own discoveries in a way which is of such benefit to all of us; it is one of the things bishops are for, and it is encouraging, in the richest sense of the word.

JOHN GARVEY

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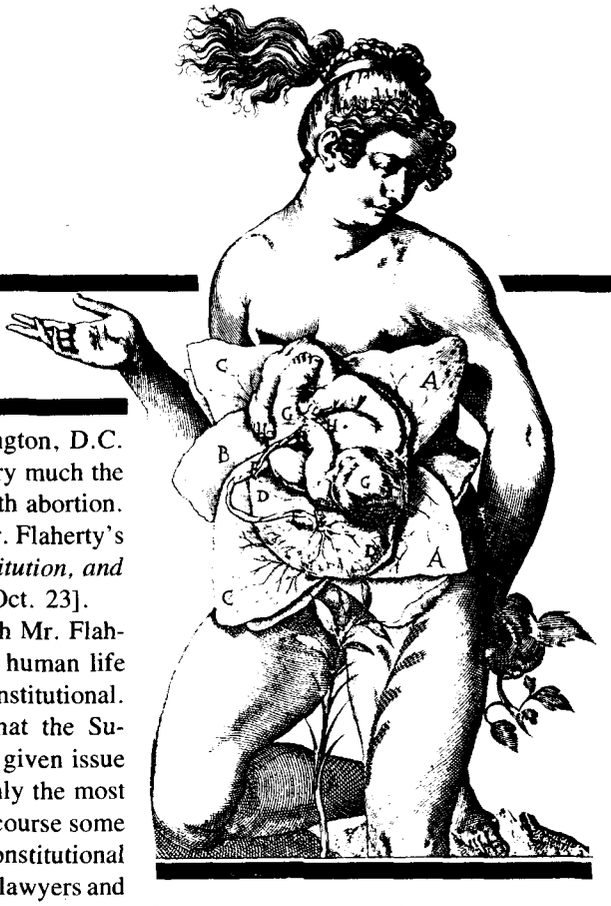
Abortion: readers respond

PROS, CONS, & DISTINCTIONS



Human life bill is constitutional

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: I enjoyed very much the two recent issues dealing with abortion. Permit me to comment on Mr. Flaherty's article "*Abortion, the Constitution, and the Human Life Statute,*" [Oct. 23].

I respectfully disagree with Mr. Flaherty's flat assertion that the human life statute is undoubtedly unconstitutional. To assert with certitude what the Supreme Court will do on any given issue takes a prophetic gift that only the most incautious would claim. Of course some proposals appear wildly unconstitutional — but there are enough good lawyers and enough history and logic behind the human life statute to give it a reasonable chance at being sustained.

Mr. Flaherty distinguishes *Katzenbach v. Morgan* from *Roe v. Wade* by correctly pointing out that in *Morgan* the court sustained a legislative *enlargement* of constitutional rights regarding literacy tests. He argues that in *Roe v. Wade,* the newly discovered right to privacy (where was it hiding the past 150 years?) would be *diminished* by a determination of fetal personhood and hence the Court's denial of personhood to the unborn must prevail. But this right to privacy if it exists at all, can only be implied in the Constitution. The guarantee of a right to life is *express* in the Constitution and so extending by statute, protection to the preborn may shrink this implied privacy right in favor of enlarging the right to life of the unborn. What is being enlarged is far more important (because it is an expressed Constititional guarantee) than what is being diminished and as so often happens, rights and duties come into conflict and choices must be made.

Here we note the games being played by supporters of the abortion ethic. When "human life" begins (creationism? the Big Bang theory?) is a different question from asking when an individual's human life begins. About this latter issue, there can be no reasonable doubt — at conception. Life, yes. Human life? Well, the new life is a member of the human species and surely Congress is competent to hold hearings and make a determination based on scientific testimony as to the beginnings of an individual's human life. This, the Court did not (because it could not) do.

Because the Court has confessed its incompetence to make a factual determination on life's beginning, due to its perceived lack of consensus, does that foreclose the issue? Is the legislative public policy-making branch — coordinate with the Executive and the Court — estopped from dealing with the most fundamental questions of society — questions literally of life and death?

Wasn't the miracle of Louise Brown that she "began" in a test tube?

Now, building on the factual scientific issue of when a human life begins, is it inappropriate — unconstitutional? — for Congress to formulate public policy concerning the value to be placed on this tiny vulnerable defenseless prenatal human life?

The most cogent criticism of *Roe v. Wade* is that the unelected Court usurped the legislative function of establishing public policy from the elected legislatures of this land. When an abuse of our institutional system such as this occurs, does that end discussion? May not the Congress and the Court dialogue on such an important issue? The human life statute is such dialogue and I'm not so sure as Mr. Flaherty is that the Court won't listen.

The Fourteenth Amendment was ratified at the same time as its ratifying states were adopting anti-abortion statutes. Does that not suggest what was understood by "right to life" in those days? And no, these laws were not to protect the pregnant woman as much as the unborn. The American Medical Association was far more protective of un-

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born life in 1859 than it is today (see 12 *Transactions of the AMA* 78, 1859). It might be noted that while the abortion issue was not much discussed as it pertains to the Fourteenth Amendment, neither was the alleged "right to privacy" that the Court found lurking in the Constitution.

Moving to the next and equally crucial issue of whether this newly legislatively defined human life is a person within the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment, we must never forget the Court confessed it did not know when human life begins. Once Congress fills this vacuum, may not other and different legal consequences follow? The assignment of personhood to a living member of the human species isn't so radical — it is logical and in keeping with our nation's historical reverence for life. . . .

Attorney Steven Galebach calls our attention to the case of *Levy v. Louisiana* 392 US 68, 70 (1968) where, in dealing with "illegitimate" children, the court states: "We start from the premise that illegitimate children are not 'nonpersons.' They are human, live and have their being."

Are not the unborn of the human species? Are they not live? Do they not have their being? To hold otherwise is nonsense. . . .

Mr. Flaherty seems to recognize the Congressional role — and even superiority to that of the Court — in fact-finding, but then asserts that the humanity of the fetus, ". . . although it may involve facts of biology, also involves moral and philosophical issues which the trotting out of those facts does not resolve." I beg to differ. Once the fact of human life is established, then the protection of that human life is the business of lawmakers. If a class of human lives may be declared non-persons by an unelected Court, then which other group of human lives can be declared non-persons and hence expendable? This involves a most sensitive question of *public policy* — not adjudication or even interpretation. Which branch of government is more suited to establish *public policy?* Which branch can be recalled by the electorate if the consent of the governed is too flagrantly ignored or dismissed?

. . . It is my conviction that the Supreme Court may not, by a seven-to-two vote, expunge the traditional American sanctity-of-life ethic from our society and tell the people that their elected representatives are powerless to do anything about it save amending the Constitution. "A government of laws and not of men" has a deeper meaning than perhaps opponents of the human life statute understand.

HENRY J. HYDE
House of Representatives

Liberals & the class war over abortion

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: As *Commonweal* recently argued with considerable passion and thoughtfulness, of all the issues in the political arena, abortion has been dealt with in the most inflexible way. Never mind that the vast majority of Americans have decidedly ambivalent views on abortion. Such ambivalence rarely gets expressed directly by politicians. If it gets expressed at all, it is by liberal Catholic politicians who say piously that they are "personally" opposed to abortion, but assert with equal piety that they feel bound to uphold "the law of the land" as expressed in the 1973 Supreme Court decision.

In fact, the polls do show that ambivalence can be popular. Consider the most frequently asked abortion questions. Majorities are consistently against an outright ban on abortion, and strongly oppose a constitutional amendment to do that. Yet powerful majorities are also recorded *against* Medicaid-funding for abortions for poor women. There is, it would seem, a consistent libertarian consensus on the issue: the government should neither prohibit nor encourage abortion.

Yet the polls show even more complexity than that. Truly overwhelming majorities believe that abortion should be allowed in the cases of rape or incest. Yet the closer one moves to questions such as whether abortion should be allowed for unmarried adults who do not want children, or for married mothers who desire no more children, the thinner the majorities get until they actually disappear.

Perhaps the most powerful piece of evidence on the ambivalence of popular opinion on abortion came in an August, 1980, survey for the *New York Times* and CBS News. That survey asked a sample 1,769 Americans what they thought of a constitutional amendment to ban abortions. Predictably, they opposed such an amendment, by 62 percent to 29 percent. But the *very same* sample was asked whether it favored an amendment to "protect the life of the unborn child." Such an amendment was favored by 50 to 39 percent. Only 62 percent of the public took what the "pro-choice" and "pro-life" lobbies would regard as a "consistent" view. In all, 26 percent of Americans were consistently "pro-life," while 36 percent were consistently "pro-choice." The plurality, 38 percent, were less than consistent, at least by the conventional views of consistency.

ALL OF THIS might be seen as evidence that *Commonweal*'s "middle ground" approach would have considerable popularity, especially among politicians.

There is, however, another complication, and that has to do with the difference between *public* issues and *voting* issues. Abortion is quite clearly a matter of broad public concern; but only a small percentage of the public actually votes for candidates primarily on the basis of that one issue. And the same *New York Times*/CBS poll indicated why President Reagan's stand on abortion in the 1980 election, which represented only a minority view, actually helped him at the polls.

The poll offered respondents a list of issues and asked them to pick those that would help them decide how to vote. Among the consistent pro-lifers — those who favored both a constitutional amendment to ban abortions *and* an amendment protecting unborn life — 34 percent declared abortion a decisive vot-

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ing issue. Among consistent pro-choicers, only 18 percent assigned abortion such an essential electoral role. Among those who answered inconsistently on the two amendment questions, 15 percent said abortion was an important voting issue.

Reduced to their essentials, these numbers show that consistent pro-lifers who vote on the abortion issue make up about 9 percent of the electorate; consistent pro-choicers who vote on the issue make up about 6.5 percent of the electorate.

Different analysts have come to different conclusions as to the precise measurement of the electoral strength of the two constituencies. Richard Wirthlin, Mr. Reagan's pollster, concluded that the pro-life position was worth about four points to Mr. Reagan. But whatever the precise numbers, it is clear that (1) as far as direct electoral impact is concerned, the abortion issues is decisive with only a small minority, and (2) that minority is closely divided in its views — and just possibly more pro-life than pro-choice.

Such findings have important implications for those seeking a middle ground on abortion, but it is worth seeing just who these two minorities are.

IN *Commonweal*'s abortion issue, Peter Steinfels cited a variety of survey findings suggesting that the fight over abortion is a conflict between two groups of *liberals*. Such a finding is exciting, if only because it flies in the face of so much conventional wisdom.

The most important facts about these two constituencies, however, have to do with the way they differ. The fight over abortion is very much a class struggle, as Peter Skerry has pointed out. The pro-life constituency is poorer and less educated than the pro-choice constituency. The August 1980 *Times*/CBS poll, for example, found that 63 percent of college graduates were consistently pro-choice; only 12 percent of college graduates were consistently pro-life. Among those with less than high school education, on the other hand, 32 percent were consistently pro-life, 18 percent consistently pro-choice. Income patterns were much the same: the higher income groups were much more pro-choice. Blacks were more pro-life than whites, the very religious Christians (Catholic and Protestant) were more pro-life, as were older Americans.

None of these findings is surprising, but they lead to an interesting corollary: pro-lifers tended to be more liberal on economic issues than pro-choicers, and just slightly more liberal on such questions than the population as a whole. These issues included such matters as whether the government should create jobs for the unemployed and whether the government should control the price of gas and oil.

These findings are not really surprising, either. Low-income people are almost always more left on economics than higher income people. Pro-lifers are, as a group, low-income people.

Yet on such "social" questions as the Equal Rights Amendment, pro-lifers were far more conservative than either pro-choicers or the general public. And pro-lifers were more likely to label themselves "conservative."

Perhaps the most interesting side-effect of all this came when those surveyed were asked their opinions of the leaders of two very different kinds of liberalism: John Anderson and Edward M. Kennedy. The consistent pro-choice constituency loved Anderson: 36 percent had a favorable view of him, 27 percent had an unfavorable view. Pro-choicers who said they voted on the basis of the abortion issue were even more ardent: 44 percent had a favorable view of Anderson; only 29 percent had an unfavorable view.

But the pro-choice constituency loathed Ted Kennedy: among consistent pro-choicers, 27 percent had a favorable view of Kennedy, 59 percent an unfavorable view; pro-choicers who voted on the basis of abortion were even more anti-Kennedy, with 23 percent having a favorable view, 60 percent an unfavorable.

Consistent pro-lifers did not much like either man, but they liked Kennedy more. Only 21 percent of consistent pro-lifers had a favorable view of Anderson, 29 percent had an unfavorable view. Pro-lifers who cast ballots on the abortion issue held similar views of Anderson: 21 percent favorable, 26 percent unfavorable. As for Kennedy, 30 percent of consistent pro-lifers had favorable views, 44 percent unfavorable views; pro-lifers who voted on the issue liked Kennedy a bit more; 34 percent had favorable views of him, 42 percent unfavorable views.

Confronting the Court

Lewiston, Maine

To the Editors: Francis Flaherty's analysis of the human life statute [Oct. 23] is unpersuasive and misleading. As a lawyer, I resent his self-congratulatory prose about how the legal profession must safeguard the system from such a plainly unconstitutional gambit. Not all lawyers agree. Professor John T. Noonan, for example, a recognized constitutional scholar, testified before the Subcommittee on Separation of Powers in favor of the bill. As he pointed out, the best feature of the bill is that it recognizes a legitimate role for Congress in interpreting and implementing the Constitution, for which there is ample precedent. And the human life statute defies the Court to reaffirm *Roe v. Wade* by squarely presenting the issue that infamous Court skirted in 1973. Those lawyers, myself among them, who support the statute see this as a healthy confrontation of co-equal branches of government and as an effective way of giving the Court a chance to reverse itself. That would be the best way, legally and otherwise, for the *Roe v. Wade* abomination to be undone.

And as a lawyer, it baffles me how this approach does nearly so much violence to the Constitution and judicial review as the Court itself did with its incredible 1973 judicial legislating in *Roe v. Wade*. Frankly, I think the reason many oppose the human life statute is because they are afraid it might work. BRYAN M. DENCH

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In short, abortion — and the related social issues — have badly split the already reeling liberal coalition. Anderson, the champion of social liberalism, plays badly among many economic liberals. Kennedy the hero of old-time economic liberalism, doesn't make it with the social liberals.

The data suggest that a middle ground on abortion might indeed have some popularity, and that liberals above all others should want to underplay the issue by way of ending the erosion of their working-class base.

But for politicians, the data point to a very different lesson: the vast majority of voters, with ambivalent views on abortion, pray that they will never have to deal with the issue in their own lives,and generally prefer to avoid the issue in making political choices. What do politicians gain when they take a compromise stand that appeases a group on an issue that the group is not likely to care about at the polls anyway? After all, that same compromise is likely to offend greatly *both* minorities that feel strongly enough about abortion to use it as a litmus test for politicians. For the calculating politician, the mathematics will vary from constituency to constituency, but it is usually likely to point clearly in one direction or the other.

The fight over abortion is a battle between classes and worldviews; between a primarily working-class group that sees its values under attack, and a middle- and upper-class group that sees itself fighting for freedom and enlightenment.

For liberals, abortion has the potential of steadily chipping away at the working-class group that has traditionally been the fountainhead for progressive economic initiatives. Many liberals have cut their losses by picking up new support from the well-to-do who see themselves defending the values of their class, if not its economic interests.

But this turn of events is full of dangers for those progressives who see the primary purpose of politicians as involving the defense and expansion of the economic opportunities of the less well-off. Over time, a liberal alliance that leans more and more on the wealthy will necessarily become more timid in its economic policies. Already, the "neoliberals" are trimming their sails on economic and redistributive matters. Such a development may be inevitable. But it must be disturbing to traditional economic liberals, no matter which side they take in the war between choice and life.

E.J. DIONNE

Pro-choice, pro-life: more on stereotypes

Columbia, Missouri

To the Editors: The November 20, 1981 issue of *Commonweal* contained several carefully researched, well-reasoned, and thought-provoking articles on abortion. There are, however, several qualifications, additions, and corrections that I would like to add.

1. It is not so clear that the abortion issue, as Mary Meehan put it, was an "albatross for the Democrats," or that it helped to defeat Jimmy Carter and numerous incumbent legislators. Evidence from the University of Michigan's Center for Political Studies national election study suggests that people who voted for Ronald Reagan for president did not differ in their attitudes toward abortion from people who voted for Jimmy Carter. This may be a case where the candidates were relatively distinct on an issue but over which the voter groups were not polarized. Based on this, I have formulated the tentative hypothesis that the outcome of the 1980 election would not have been significantly different if the word abortion had not been uttered. I say tentative because things usually become more complicated as they are examined in depth. However, the evidence available thus far is not inconsistent with this hypothesis. The definite analysis of the 1980 Congressional elections has not yet been done. It does appear that the minority who voted for John Anderson were relatively permissive on abortion.

2. The notion that Catholics are distinctively liberal or inclined toward the Democratic party should be abandoned. Because they were disproportionately in immigrant minority groups that had experienced prejudice and discrimination, and because they had relatively low socio-economic status, Catholics were an important part of the New Deal coalition. That political distinctiveness has gradually diminished as the socio-economic status of Catholics has increased. Now the status of Catholics is slightly above the national average. The results of the *New York Times* exit poll of 1980 indicated that there was no minority group whose vote resembled the vote of the electorate more closely than that of Catholics. In effect, 1980 was the first year in which, if one wanted to predict the person's vote, it was more useful to know the voter's gender than to know whether the voter was Catholic. Maybe in the future, Catholics will be used as a bellweather indicator. As the Catholic vote goes, so goes the nation, or should it be vice versa?

3. James R. Kelly's article, "Beyond the stereotypes" asserts that the right-to-life movement takes no position on other issues such as military security or the Equal Rights Amendment. In fact, the largest pro-life organization, the National Right to Life Committee, rejected by resolution the ERA and urged states not to ratify it. This was done, presumably, because the ERA was seen as linked to the legal status of abortion and to its continuing to be legally available. That interpretation was rather far-fetched and not based on any consensus among independent legal scholars who have considered that possibility.

4. Mary Meehan points to the defensiveness of some Catholic liberals and how they are influenced by the imputation from some pro-choice leaders that the "right-to-life movement is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Catholic hierarchy." I am not a pro-choice leader and I would not agree with the extreme assertion in quotes. But I would say that the Catholic church, its hierarchy, established communication networks, and active and committed members collectively comprised a *sine qua non* of the anti-abortion movement in the U.S. in the 1970s. Please note carefully what this

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does and does not say. It does not give the Catholic church responsibility (credit or blame) for getting the anti-abortion laws on the books back in the nineteenth-century. It also does not, in any way, deny that there are many people in the U.S. fervently opposed to abortion who are not Catholics. . . . It also does not deny that some members in the anti-abortion organizations are of various religious faiths, and some with no particular faith. Had it not been for the Catholic church, however, there would have been many citizens with anti-abortion sentiments but there would not have been an anti-abortion countermovement of any consequence. And that is what really matters in determining the course of events in this country. You can show policy-makers all the polls in the world, but what affects them much more is if you can mount an effective and broadly based social movement that focuses on pressure politics, electoral politics, and public education campaigns. A recent analysis has also shown that across nations, the existence and strength of an anti-abortion movement is correlated positively with the percentage of Catholics in the country.

I regard the *sine qua non* assertion as, in no way derogatory to the Catholic church. On the other side, Jews are actually more overrepresented, proportionately, in the pro-choice movement than Catholics are in the pro-life movement. Evidently, the Holocaust analogy has fallen flat with the ethnic or religious group to whom it should be potentially most meaningful or relevant. But the point is that if the anti-abortion movement has justice and truth on its side, Catholics could take pride in the leadership role they have played. I was intrigued by the reaction of one state pro-life leader when I told her that my research indicated that about seventy-seven percent of the members in her group were Catholic. "That will be very useful," she said, "as I approach Protestant leaders to try to encourage more Protestant participation."

5. Mary Meehan suggests that if more liberals were to study embryology books, they would understand that the debate over abortion can be resolved without reference to theology. If she is implying that the abortion issue can, or will, be resolved by embryology or any other other science, I think she is mistaken. People in NARAL know the facts of life. Over a fourth of them, in my survey, even acknowledge that abortion involves the killing a living creature. So, apparently, does the IUD and the low dosage estrogen birth control pill. The question is not when an organism, with a historically unique genetic combination, begins its existence, but rather at what point in its development does it warrant the protection of the law? And how are its interests to be balanced in relation to those of the woman with whom it is so interdependent? These questions, I submit, will not be settled by science. Rather, they may be informed by science, but it is in the political realm that they will be answered. . . .

Logansport, Ind.

To the Editors: Congratulations on your courage in tackling the issue of abortion in your issue of November 20, 1981. Your coverage was of such all-embracing honesty and intelligence that you will probably get outraged mail from every nut in the country.

I particularly enjoyed and related to (*Mea Culpa* Department) the article "Catholic Liberals and Abortion" by Mary Meehan. I must admit I still have real problems voting for a candidate who is anti-abortion but wrong on most other issues that are important to me. I need only look at the results of the 1980 elections to be further troubled. I believe this is known as "winning the battle but losing the war," but if liberal politicians learned anything from the debacle, it may prove to have been worth it.

BILL McTAGGART

I agree with Meehan that people should be willing to view the consequences of their actions. (I have never hesitated to look at and read the literature of the pro-life movement. Somehow, I personally found more gruesome the argument by one author, writing in *Family Planning Perspectives*, that there should be a graduated fee scale for abortions and that it should be based on a careful measurement of fetal foot size.) But I am not so sure that people should be legally compelled to view the consequences of their actions, as in the case of certain laws.

6. I agree with Meehan that supporting militarism and capital punishment does not disqualify one from defending the unborn. But opposing abortion is not to be equated with being pro-life. The latter is a far more general and abstract orientation from which a number of specific issue positions might logically follow. Personally, I regard the claim that one is pro-life because of one's opposition to abortion, while simultaneously favoring the deployment of the neutron bomb (designed to destroy life through enhanced radiation while leaving physical structures like buildings and machines intact) as a bad joke.

7. James Kelly noted that Harriet Van Horne cited no studies linking pro-war and anti-abortion attitudes when claiming that the right-to-life activists were "hawks shrieking for blood in the dark days of Vietnam." My analyses of public opinion data indicate that there was a slight relationship in that direction. Among activists, the difference is more pronounced. In one survey, I found that 77 percent of the pro-choice activists opposed U.S. military action in Vietnam compared to only 35 percent of the pro-life activists. This is a much larger difference than one would expect to occur by chance, but perhaps the more crucial question now is how people respond to the current military escalation and to military interventions in the future. The recent unequivocal and outspoken opposition to nuclear weaponry on the part of many Catholic bishops is certainly not insignificant.

With regard to the *New York Times* stereotype of pro-lifers referred to by John Fenton, the following can be said:

- The coalition between Catholic and Protestant fundamentalists on abortion is a very interesting development and something new under the sun. It did not happen in relation to abolition, suffrage, prohibition, civil rights, or the Vietnam war issues. In fact, fundamentalism was,

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historically, in the Midwest and South especially, a major source of anti-Catholic prejudice and discrimination.

• Among the public, there is at least a slight relationship between political ideology and position on abortion. As you move from extreme liberal to extreme conservative, there is a slight increase in opposition to abortion. Conservative Democrats are most opposed, and liberal independents least opposed to legalized abortion. Members of the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) are more conservative, politically, than members of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), and this relationship is actually rather substantial.

• People who believe interracial marriage should be outlawed are more opposed to legalized abortion than those who do not so believe. However, this relationship occurs only among Protestants and not Catholics. This may say something about the Protestant base of anti-abortion sentiment.

• In 1980, 84 percent of the NRLC were single-issue voters compared to 47 percent of NARAL. To borrow an analogy from G. Gordon Liddy, it seems that the preponderant majority of one side is playing "hardball" while the slim majority of the other side is playing "softball." The lesson here is that some stereotypes do contain at least a kernel of truth.

8. The assertion of Professors Tatalovich and Daynes that, "for practical purposes, [the Supreme Court took] the position that protectable life begins at birth" is misleading. It was clearly not the intention of the Supreme Court that an eight-month fetus be unprotected. Rather, they used the criterion of "viability" which corresponded roughly at that time with the third trimester of pregnancy. I agree with their assessment that the majority of U.S. adults are moderates on abortion rejecting both extremely permissive and restrictive alternatives, and favoring therapeutic abortion. The irony is that the public favored a greater degree of permissiveness than allowed prior to 1973, but the Supreme Court leap-frogged public opinion and created a situation more permissive than that preferred by the people.

There is no doubt that the people evaluate abortion differently depending on the stage of the pregnancy. There would be broad support in the public for prohibiting third-trimester abortions except in the most rare of circumstances. And it would not have been difficult for the pro-life people to have achieved that outcome. However, both the NRLC and NARAL tend toward extreme positions, declaring that all, or nearly all, or no, or almost no, fetal life is deserving of legal protection. Therefore, NRLC has not aspired toward, nor would it be satisfied with, a third-trimester proscription on abortion. NRLC and NARAL tend to see the situation as a dichotomy, but most citizens see it as a continuum.

On the other side, the eight-week point suggested by Mr. Steinfels as a reasonable compromise position is probably too restrictive to be acceptable to moderates who oppose some but not all abortions. There is also the dilemma which concerns what would happen if late-stage abortions were forbidden. Obviously, some women and girls would be motivated to obtain their abortion sooner. But there are others who would be prevented from having an abortion by such a restriction. However, of all the women who currently obtain abortions, the ones who get late-stage abortions are probably the least able and qualified, socially, economically, and psychologically, to become mothers. Of course, they could give their children up for adoption, but this would not be an acceptable alternative to many of them.

9. Finally, the assertion is often made by NARAL and other pro-choice proponents that women who want an abortion are going to get an abortion regardless of its legal status and, therefore, the only real question is the circumstances (safety, cost, stigma, legality, accessibility) of the abortion. That assertion flies in the face of facts now available. Whether an abortion facility is available close by is a major determinant of the abortion rate. More than three-fourths of NARAL members acknowledge that the actual number of abortions has increased in the U.S. since 1973. The early estimates were that 70 percent of the legal abortions were replacing illegal ones.

That now appears to have been too high, or at least not generalizable, but if it were accurate, it would indicate that 30 percent of the legal abortions would not have taken place had it been illegal. On the other side, there is no doubt that the Hyde Amendment has a discernible effect on the actual number of abortions. By severely restricting federal funds for abortions obtained by poor people, abortions by Medicaid-eligible women were reduced by 20 percent in those states that didn't step in to pick up the tab with state money. There is virtually no doubt that a state's rights amendment or the Human Life Amendment would have a substantially greater effect on the number of abortions performed. Some people want an abortion and feel so desperate they will get one regardless of legality. But there are others whose decision is apparently more marginal, and who might not have an abortion if it were illegal or not easily accessible. So it appears clear that, in this area, personal morality can be affected by legislation. Whether it should be, and, if so, how, is, as they say, another matter.

DONALD GRANBERG
University of Missouri-Columbia

Women's interests, religion, state power

Summit, N.J.

To the Editors: I have followed with interest the splendid collection of articles on the abortion issue (John Garvey, last June 19; Francis Flaherty, October 23; and virtually the entire issue of November 20, 1981) which *Commonweal* has recently featured. Francis Flaherty's analysis of the legal complexities of the proposed human life statute was simply first-rate. And the articles in the recent November 20 issue, especially the description of right-to-life "pioneers" by James Kelly, were significant contributions to the continuing discussion of public policy on abortion. In

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particular they provide a much needed defense of Catholic involvement on the issue and a much-needed corrective to the *New York Times*-NARAL-Planned Parenthood stereotype of typical pro-lifers as "religious fundamentalists, political conservatives, social racists, and single-issue voters." There is, of course, relatively little truth to this stereotype; in fact, it seems that the American Catholic church has finally reached some consistently pro-life position in the recent statement by Archbishop John Roach reminding of the immorality of nuclear war, of abortion, and of any kind of economic policy which promotes the arms race at the expense of feeding the poor. Of course it may also be true that continuing pro-choice criticism of Catholics for focusing via pastoral plans on abortion *only* has prodded the bishops to articulate explicitly a broader respect-for-life ideology.

In the spirit of continuing the conversation initiated by *Commonweal,* may I offer the following comments and observations? First, the articles reflect a remarkable inattention to abortion from a woman's perspective. In his otherwise thought-provoking essay, John Garvey never once mentions women—women's bodies and souls, women's interests, women's dilemmas. I realize there may be a tendency in moral theology to be abstract and general, but on this issue that temptation must be resisted. If particular abortions in concrete situations involve unborn fetuses, they also involve particular women whose interests must be considered. However, recent *Commonweal* articles evince little appreciation of these interests. It is not only that women must pay the price for involuntarily-contracted pregnancies. It is that Catholic liberals, like other liberals, should have the highest respect for the moral autonomy of those (blacks, women, and other minorities) who have long been treated as second-class citizens. The abortion issue is therefore very important for women who have been treated as inferiors not equals, who were not viewed as moral beings having rights to make basic, life-determining decisions. I realize that it is fashionable these days to denigrate liberals and to dismiss pro-choice arguments as somehow canonizing irresponsible choice. But there is, it seems to me, a real need to appreciate the positive elements in both the pro-choice position and the movement for greater autonomy on the part of women.

Second, Catholic liberals have, as editor Steinfels remarks, a relatively sophisticated understanding of the relation between law and morality and a profound respect for the differing religious and moral views of fellow citizens in a pluralistic society. These attitudes have led lawyers and theologians such as Robert Drinan, Charles Curran, and Gregory Baum to appreciate abortion as an ecumenical dilemma and to urge that we should not rely upon the state to resolve moral dilemmas or social problems about which public opinion is so deeply divided. There are two important questions here: one concerns constitutional rights to religious freedom and the second relates to distinctions between state and society.

One must address the question whether abortion is a religious issue. John Garvey in his *Commonweal* essay argues that this is a profoundly religious issue; Mary Meehan thinks this is a purely secular issue about which biological evidence is conclusive. In future issues, I would like *Commonweal* editors to pursue this question, for if abortion is a religious issue, Catholic liberals may feel they have special duties to respect the religious and conscience rights of others — duties grounded in an understanding of First Amendment religious freedoms as well as the Declaration on Religious Liberty of Vatican II.

Concerning the distinction between state and society, liberals (e.g., L.T. Hobhouse) have recognized that not every social issue need be addressed in the political forum and that a healthy liberal society is one in which individuals and groups spontaneously voluntarily cooperate to resolve such problems. I saw an example of this kind of potential for cooperation at the 1979 National Conference on Abortion at Notre Dame University. In conversations with the directors of both a maternity home (B.E.T.A. in Orlando, Florida) and an abortion clinic (Pre-Term in Cleveland, Ohio), it became clear that both organizations were led by sensible, responsible women united by a genuine concern for the many often desperate women who appealed to them for assistance. Both these organizations were interested in preventing involuntary pregnancies through sex education, counseling, and other services, especially programs for teenagers. Both complained that the continual politicization of the abortion issue diverted valuable time, energy, and resources from these other positive efforts to prevent abortion.

I left the Notre Dame conference impressed that the work of these organizations was not the product of state action. I remain convinced that abortion should be treated as a social problem, not as a political issue to be fought out by bitterly polarized factions in courts and legislatures. Ideally, it would be best if there were no law on abortion; the state ought not to pronounce upon it. However, given that we have had restrictive laws since the nineteenth century, the next best situation is a law which permits individuals to do in conscience what they think they should do. The Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade* constitutes this kind of permissive law and so I do not favor its repeal. From a liberal perspective, it is preferable to some moderately restrictive law which is illogical, which would not evoke compliance, and which would be neither enforced nor enforceable.

MARY SEGERS TRAVERS

Grounds for reversal

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: Raymond Tatalovich and Byron W. Daynes listed three errors in the Supreme Court's abortion opinion of 1973 [Nov. 20].

There was also a very serious fourth error. The Justices read the Fourteenth Amendment so poorly that they ended up with a complete inversion of its original intent. The amendment was enacted in 1868 to extend the old, commonly recognized civil rights of white Americans to a new group of human beings who had

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previously been denied them, that is, to blacks. The amendment did not propose to devise or introduce new rights—blacks were not to be privileged over whites—but simply, blacks were to be accorded the old familiar rights of the whites.

But the 1973 Court misused the amendment to fashion a new "right," the right of women to abortion. As a result, a whole group of human beings, the unborn, were now denied the right to life that they had previously enjoyed under so many state laws.

Commonweal readers may welcome a word here on how the Court's first error, as listed by Tatalovich and Daynes, could have been possible. The stage for the error was set by an inattentive reading of the history of New Jersey's 1849 abortion statute. This act was designed as a supplement to the common law. That old law protected the unborn baby; it said nothing about the mother's safety. The then-new 1849 act was intended to protect the mother *also*. A nodding twentieth century scholar got the impression that New Jersey wanted to protect mothers *only*.

Sadly, the Supreme Court promptly accepted, uncritically, the mistaken view. Ironically, the same 1973 Court noted what they called the "uncritical" reliance of lower American courts on the opinion of Coke on abortion.

What now? Errors are nothing new, neither among scholars nor Justices. For genuine scholars and for respected judges, the normal course is to review one's work in the light of new knowledge, and if need be, to revise it. We should remember the forthright 1938 reversing case, *Erie*. JOHN DOEBELE

The right question

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: I have read with interest, over the years, the pros and cons of abortion, and more immediately the recent excellent issue of *Commonweal* that deals in some depth with this problem. Until thinking is further clarified, Peter Steinfels's position seems to be the only realistic and practical one in a society of such disparate viewpoints as ours. In general, however, I find the questions raised, i.e. when does the fetus become a person, to be unanswerable, and the arguments to be emotional and unenlightening, i.e. abortion is murder of the innocents, we must protect the rights of the unborn, the right of privacy, the right of a woman to the control of her own body, etc.

Two questions, it seems to me, must be asked in order to deal rationally with this subject. The first is relatively easy to answer objectively: what is the human embryo or fetus? It is unlikely that many people would question that it is a living thing — it grows. If it is living, then what kind of life is it, zebra life, cow life? Put in that way, any child could answer this question, but we can fall back on science which knows that this life is genetically programmed to become a particular human being. Pro-abortionists must then face the reality that the fetus, even the embryo, is human life.

Once that fact is accepted, we can move on to the truly difficult question, the one that pro-lifers in particular must face: under what conditions, if any, is the taking of human life permissible? We know that the church has never been absolute in its interpretation of the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." It has defended the taking of human life under certain circumstances, as has society, namely in self-defense, and in allowing for a just war. While the rhetoric will probably be no less emotional as we attempt to answer this question, at least we will be calling a spade a spade and dealing honestly with the reality of the issue. At least we will be asking the right question. ELEANOR P. MERRICK

Therapeutic to whom?

Notre Dame, Ind.

To the Editors: Your commendable gathering of essays on abortion [Nov. 20] calls for one correction in the astute piece by Raymond Tatalovich and Byron W. Daynes, "The Trauma of Abortion Politics."

Writing of the 1959 proposal that was to influence the relaxation of many state laws, the authors state that "the American Law Institute recommended 'therapeutic' abortion in cases where the mother's or child's physical or mental health was endangered or in cases of rape." Not exactly. What the ALI recommended as a model statute was that abortion be lawful when a physician "believes that there is substantial risk that continuance of the pregnancy would gravely impair the physical or mental health of the mother or that the child would be born with grave physical or mental defect, or that the pregnancy resulted from rape, incest, or other felonious intercourse."

In the first of these cases, abortion might arguably be called therapeutic because a mother's health is being defended. But in the second and third cases, where the unborn may be handicapped or has been conceived by criminal act, since no one's health is being preserved, abortion can be called therapeutic only by an abuse of that word's true meaning. Indeed, if one regards abortion from the perspective of the obstetrician-gynecologist's second, unborn patient, no abortion in any case can be therapeutic, since its very intent is to destroy the patient.

The word "therapeutic," strategically misapplied, served abortion advocates to portray abortion as a "medical" procedure, best left to the technical judgment of physicians. Once that strategy had succeeded in giving doctors a free hand to abort at will, it was no longer necessary to continue the pretense that anyone's health was at stake.

Your authors seem aware of this. One is therefore puzzled to note that they use the expression thirteen times to characterize what was, in law, only rarely done for purposes of health, and, in fact, almost never.

(REV.) JAMES T. BURTCHAELL, C.S.C.

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Legislating morality

Arlington Heights, Ill.

To the Editors: The enactment of the anti-abortion legislation would be morally and legally right because it would acknowledge the scientific fact that human life begins at conception and, moreover, would provide legal protection for unborn babies.

The California Medical Association, in the September 1970 issue of *California Medicine*, observed that it is a "scientific fact" that "human life begins at conception and is continuous, whether intra- or extra-uterine, until death." Even the late Dr. Alan Guttmacher, an avid pro-abortionist, acknowledged that a baby exists at conception, and that "at the exact moment when a new life is initiated (fertilization), a great deal is forever irrevocable—its sex, coloring, body build, blood group, and in large measure its mental capacity or emotional stability."

True, anti-abortion laws legislate morality, but only in the same sense that we legislate morality when we outlaw incest, rape, child prostitution, stealing and murder. When we make these activities illegal, we "impose moral, ethical and religious values" on those who engage in these acts.

Mary Meehan, in her otherwise fine abortion article, strongly implies that being "pro-life" necessarily means that one must oppose capital punishment. In my view, it is *not* a contradiction for one to oppose abortion on demand and, at the same time, favor the death penalty for, say, someone who has raped and murdered a child. The unborn child is innocent of wrongdoing, while the rapist-murderer has taken the life of another human being.

The death penalty should be permissible for rape-murder, premeditated murder, murder-for-hire, kidnapping that results in death, treason, terrorist bombings, the murder of policemen, firemen and FBI agents in the line of duty, and the assassination of the president.

If society has the moral right and obligation to act in collective self-defense against aggression emanating from *without* (e.g., against Nazi and Communist assaults on decency and liberty), then society likewise has the moral right and obligation to defend itself against aggression emanating from *within* (e.g., against people who rape and murder children). HAVEN BRADFORD GOW

Abortion & intimacy

Wausau, Wisc.

To the Editors: Thank you for the fine issue on abortion. However, regardless of any restrictive legislation that may be passed eventually, the number of abortions (and unwed mothers) is not likely to decline significantly until better birth control methods are widely available, and most importantly, until there is better sex education for young people.

Unfortunately, better sex education will depend on the sexology experts achieving a more profound understanding of human sexuality. Some, like Rollo May, already recognize that sexual fulfillment depends on emotional intimacy, and many recognize that emotional intimacy requires emotional maturity. So there is hope that the experts will eventually recognize that the emotional intimacy necessary for sexual fulfillment not only requires the "inner" sense of security of emotional maturity, but also requires the "external" security of the trust-sustaining environment a loving marriage creates. . . .

Many married couples have long known this. Many — expecially those married Catholics who made the effort to understand their intuitive rejection of *Humanae Vitae* — have also learned that physical intimacy is the vital stepping stone to the emotional intimacy that leads to sexual fulfillment and bonds the couple in love. But, lacking scholarly expertise and intimidated by the experts, these married couples, for the most part, have remained silent. In the face of the rising rate of abortions and unwed mothers, their deeper insight is desperately needed. They should take every opportunity to disagree publicly with both those who deny the complex relationship between our sexuality and our need for emotional intimacy and those who deny that the security of a trust-sustaining environment is necessary before physical intimacy can become an effective stepping stone to emotional intimacy and sexual fulfillment MARILYN KRAMER

Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich.

To the Editors: Thank you for your November 20, 1981 issue. It is one of the finest, contemporary commentaries on the abortion issue that I have read. Special kudos to Mary Meehan whose lucid logic makes me want to stand and clap — even in the privacy of my study!

(REV.) FRANCIS X. CANFIELD

Life & egalitarianism

Valparaiso, Ind.

To the Editors: The problem with Peter Steinfels's "eight weekers' rights" abortion solution is this: An individual human being begins at conception in the sense that a new cybernetic or self-monitoring system of our species begins at that point and continues until death. All intermediate changes are in quality and not in kind of entity. But to say that one's fundamental human rights depend on one's quality of life, and that some human beings haven't yet developed enough quality, clashes with our near-absolute modern egalitarianism. This is why pro-choicers must insist nonsensically that a magical change in kind of being occurs at some point in gestation or thereafter. If we believed in natural hierarchy, the fetus could be seen as indeed a person, but one of an inferior sort. Curiously, it is liberalism itself that requires that fundamental human rights be recognized from conception, because only thus can the egalitarian impulse honestly and consistently be carried through. Listen to pro-lifers talk. Before anything else, they are liberal egalitarians.

But Steinfels and I may disagree only in principle. As to practice, I agree with his basic idea of returning the matter to

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the states along with a minimum federal standard of protection, as the Hatch proposal permits. Many of our intuitions regarding embryos do not conform to our egalitarian faith, and protection after eight weeks on the federal level might be an appropriate temporary compromise, despite its unprincipled nature. But if we hope ever to achieve moral wholeness, we must work for a community which can intuitively and whole-heartedly protect and care for each of our fellow human beings no matter how small and seemingly alien they may be.

RICHARD STITH
Professor of Law
Valparaiso University

Nantucket, Mass.

To the Editors: After reading William V. Shannon's "Middle Way on Abortion" in the *Boston Globe* [Nov. 25], I am in a state of shock. How could Catholic *Commonweal* compromise on abortion? Is Mr. Steinfels saying that abortion should be made illegal after the fetus is eight weeks old? He would kill it the day before it's eight weeks old, but not the day after? And when science has agreed life begins at conception?

Are you Catholic or not? Are you with Christ or against him? Has it come to this? Catholic mgazines are advocating abortion? If so, Mr. Steinfels should tremble in his boots, because he'll have a lot to answer to.

Compromise can pave paths in many directions. If you make murder legal at eight weeks, why not ten weeks, or eight months or eighty years?

Don't complicate a simple issue. It's wrong to kill an *innocent* human whatever his age for whatever reason, and you know it!

KAY MACK

Catholic before liberal

Athens, Ohio

To the Editors: I'm not a Catholic. I'm a leftist historian who, in doing a bibliography for a seminar, felt an obligation to cite *Commonweal* as representative of a Catholic viewpoint. By accident I came across your issue on abortion, and I was shocked by its contents.

My previous understanding was that *Commonweal* was a liberal Catholic publication. You have now convinced me that your editorial line is almost monolithically behind the hierarchy. All seven of the articles on abortion had many occasional clever and progressive lines. But six out of the seven writers in the end come out for a constitutional amendment, Rep. Henry Hyde, or clichés like "pro-life," "anti-abortion," and "the unborn child." The major exception was the article by Peter Steinfels, but even he wants to push back from twelve weeks to eight weeks the right of a woman (according to *Roe v. Wade* in 1973) to decide what to do about her fetus. Although more liberal than the others, even Steinfels had to show he was Catholic before liberal.

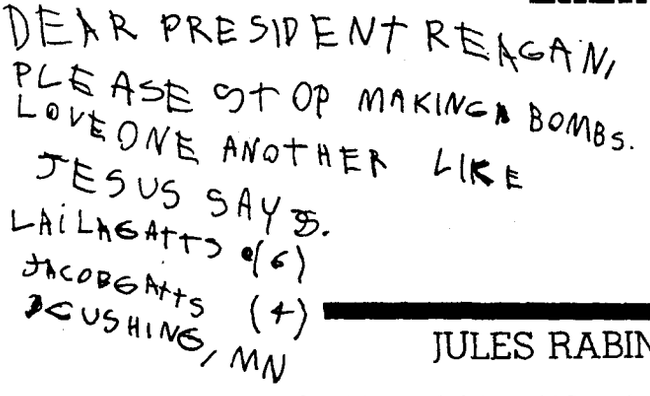
The right to choice on abortion is probably the religious freedom under heaviest attack in America today.

My new attitude toward *Commonweal* is parallel to my attitude toward the Carter administration—basically conservative, with some liberal cosmetics.

It seems to me that toleration is a far greater value to both Catholics and non-Catholics than propagating the theology that independent human life begins with fertilization. The best line in your special issue was on p. 652, quoting the answer Sir Thomas More gave to the Duke of Norfolk, about conscience. I only wish that *Commonweal* could live up to that high standard in the future.

ROBERT H. WHEALEY
Associate Professor of History
Ohio University

EXERCISING THE RIGHT OF PETITION



The children's campaign

JULES RABIN

A FEW MINUTES before 8 A.M., on a bright, cold Saturday morning in October, two big vans bearing Vermont license plates, and a small car with Maine plates pulled up in front of the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue, and let out a couple of dozen kids who were fulfilling a pledge some of them had made five months earlier to bring a children's argument for nuclear disarmament to the door of the White House. The children came with winter jackets, a dozen signs ("We are Scared," "God Put Us Here for Peace," "Don't Destroy the Only World"), 2500 leaflets, and the fruit of their five months of hard work: 2800 letters from kids in thirty-eight states, who wanted to let President Reagan know how they felt about a future menaced by the impersonal wager of our nuclear diplomacy.

The Children's Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was

JULES RABIN, *the father of some of the children described in the article above, lives in Vermont.*

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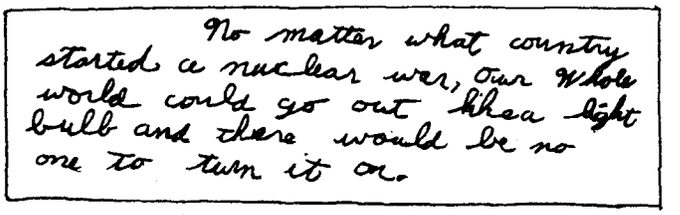
born in Plainfield, Vermont in May, 1981, in the course of an all-day meeting of six lifelong friends, aged twelve to twenty-two, from Boston, Maine, and Vermont, some of whom had been writing back and forth during the previous year about their fears of a nuclear holocaust. The twenty-two-year-old, an elder figure, attended just that one meeting and dropped out. The main work of the campaign was carried on by the five remaining young women, aged twelve, fourteen, fifteen, fifteen, nineteen. The nineteen-year-old became a member *emerita* following the Washington action. The kids have run the whole campaign themselves, accepting the collaboration of adults as "pages, messengers, and chauffeurs," as one said, asking for advice when they felt they needed it, and accepting unsolicited advice reluctantly, in the cases where it made sense to them.

The organizers of the Children's Campaign did considerable homework in preparation for their day in Washington. On the basis of trial readings, they figured that they'd need close to thirty hours to read every letter. Weeks before, they had obtained a police permit to hold their letter-reading in front of the White House. They had considered the size of the sidewalk; since it is wide and broad, they planned to set up several teams there of three kids each, with a reader at the center of each team, and a helper on either side. They felt an unspoken compact with the hundreds, and ultimately thousands, of kids who had written: every letter would be beamed out in an attentive and respectful voice to the presence in the White House.

The letters in hand amounted to forty-five child-hours of reading time. In the last week of the campaign, and for the two mail delivery days following, an average of three hundred letters came into the home office each day. (The "home office," managed in the last weeks of the campaign by the twelve-year-old, was actually a corner of the kitchen of two of the original organizers: a home-made desk and two sets of shelves made of crates from the Reddy Safety Pin Co. of Montpelier, Vt. And on Friday in Washington another Vermont contingent arrived with kids and almost one thousand more letters. It was cold enough to produce shivers.

The great reading began promptly at 8 A.M. The first readers sounded tense, from the cold and the nervousness of performing a public act in that extraordinary place. They were finally Doing It, practicing the venerated right of free speech at the very doorstep of the nation's most powerful man, after five months of preparation. By indirect paths these young people were disciples of Dr. Helen Caldicott, president of Physicians for Social Responsibility. Like her, they had become persuaded of the great and possibly terminal danger we all live in while the two great powers play at the nuclear arms race on the world's chess board. They had become proficient in the arithmetic of kilotonnage and megatonnage, the casualties of the little Hiroshima bomb, and the millionfold magnification of the original bomb's power in the world's nuclear arsenals. But their strongest thoughts were fixed on the moral insupportability of any shred of nuclear threat or act.

Throughout most of the morning, three or four teams of kids


No matter what country
started a nuclear war, our whole
world could go out like a light
bulb and there would be no
one to turn it on.

at a time carried on the reading, their backs to the traffic of Pennsylvania Ave., their faces and voices turned towards the White House. Kids not in the reading groups held up the signs, while other kids distributed a leaflet, whose text was completed by some of the organizers on the drive down from New England. The five original organizers had been invited to attend a day of rich briefing on Capitol Hill, before the day of the letter-reading (with Senator Leahy, an aide of Senator Cranston, Herbert Scoville of the Arms Control Association, and two disarmament specialists from the Library of Congress). They would spend another day, Friday, on radio interviews and calls to the press to inform them about Saturday's doings at the White House.

Most of the morning of the reading there were more kids on the sidewalk than Washingtonians or tourists. Towards mid-morning, the chill dissipated, and the kids reversed the pattern of the first hours, moving out of the sun into the shade. By mid-morning, they had got over their initial nervousness. The public sidewalk in front of the White House had become as much theirs as anyone else's in the land.

For the most part, passersby didn't linger to hear what the kids were saying. They seemed suspicious of sidewalk encounters, and lacking in old-fashioned Hyde Park curiosity. An observant Swiss visitor noticed that of the people who stopped briefly to listen, many left as soon as the child-reader came to the word "nuclear."

A SIDEWALK press conference had been called for 1:30 in the afternoon. Besides the facts of the kids' five-months-long campaign and their views on nuclear war, there was a small piece of current news to share with the press. After months of futile correspondence with the White House, and, in the week before the great day in Washington, almost daily phone conversations with a concerned senior policy adviser of Reagan's (concerned in part because he, too, was from Vermont, the state from which most of the organizers hailed), the White House informed the children on the morning of the letter-reading that Thelma Duggin, the White House liaison for youth would officially receive their letters at 1 P.M.

That message from the White House had heartened the kids. They felt that the significance of their work and of the consolidated viewpoints of 2800 kids across the country was being acknowledged. They had looked up the First Amendment to the Constitution, and knew they had the right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances . . . and to have their petition received and considered.

There were a lot of reporters and cameras on hand for the meeting between Ms. Duggin and the kids. But just two minutes before the appointed time, another woman came out of the White House to inform the children that Thelma Duggin

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would not appear, because of the presence of cameras. A White House policy was cited, which forbade the appearance of officials when there were cameras around.

The kids were disappointed but not surprised. Except for the intervention of their fellow-Vermonter, the government had been consistently remote in its dealings with them. As those who weren't reading milled around, discussing what they should do, an odd thing happened. The sprinklers close to the margin of the White House lawn were turned on, sending a spray through the fence and onto the adjacent portion of the sidewalk. Kids, lunches, and letters were moistened, and the whole operation had to be moved to a dry portion of the sidewalk. The kids didn't make much of the occurrence, though they minded their letters getting wet. Perhaps because they're not far themselves from the age of schoolyard pranks, certainly because they had the world's most important business in their hands, they let the annoyance dry off in the warm afternoon sun, and went on with the reading.

At 5:30 P.M., an hour on Saturday when the sidewalk in front of the White House is almost deserted, and, in October, chill comes back to the street, the children reached the letter which they had held for last. It was from Bolinas, California, a 2½ x 6 ft. scroll, with a brief appeal at the top to President Reagan to quit the nuclear arms race, and the signatures of more than a hundred kids below. The message on top was written in heavy black ink in a fine calligrapher's hand; the signatures below were all kids' pleasure, exuberant in the color of felt-tip markers and the kind of signature-flourishes that appear on graffiti and kids' sport-jackets.

The dauntless CCNDers, dazed by their hours in the eye of the world, dazed by what they had dared and, by golly, done, let everything go, including the last shreds of solemnity, and read off, by turns and in chorus, up and down, in the spirit of the multiple colors in which they were written, the names of the hundred kids from Bolinas who had taken the time and trouble and had the trust to send their message across the country to improbable Vermont, for an even more improbable trip six hundred miles south to the president's very doorstep. It was fitting that the kids saved for last and best a letter from California because in proportion to its population, great California had sent perhaps five times more letters than any other state of the thirty-eight that spoke up. And if the Bolinas kids wrote from a Catholic school, their eminent place in the day's doings was doubly deserved, because Catholic schools were responsible for an imposingly large fraction of all the letters received.

THE PUBLIC READING of the 2800 letters was finished, and evening was coming on. The kids were worried about the effect of all the work that had gone to make the day. No gate or door to the White House had opened for them, and it was to the heart of the White House itself that they wanted their composite message to reach. One child, in a radio interview, had assessed the work of the campaign organizers and the thousands of kids who had written letters as "a drop in the bucket." She said it as confidently as if she had counted how many drops it takes to fill a bucket, and with one in and only a million to go, there was hope after all for our side of the world. Now it occurred to the guardians of that precious drop that it could disappear without a trace in the great shuffle of the president's faceless establishment.

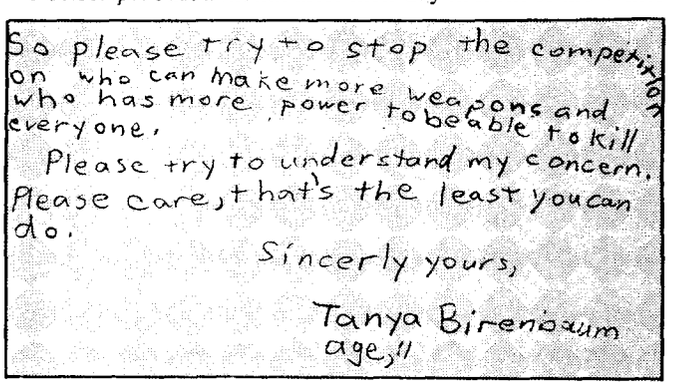
As a last and only resort, the kid who knew now from practice how to telephone the White House, called to see if the letters could be accepted at the White House mailroom that very evening. Yes, the mailroom could be reached through a side door of the Executive Office Building, around the corner. The remaining kids, with a fine sense of political drama, lined up in a single file, twenty to twenty-five of them, carrying the signs they had used throughout the day, and displaying dozens of manila envelopes, filled with the letters for President Reagan, and freshly inscribed with the president's name. They walked along the broad sidewalk of Pennsylvania Avenue, now deserted at the supper hour, in a quiet procession observed by practically no one, and around the corner of 17th Street to the Executive Office Building entrance. They had been advised to send just one person in. Their experienced White House negotiator came out a few minutes later with Mr. J.T. Buckler of the White House mailroom. The startled man won a round of applause from the kids, who were relieved that from the blank wall of government, someone had emerged with a face and voice and hands, who was taking notice of them . . . a *nice* face and a *nice* voice, at that.

Mr. Buckler had to duck into the Executive Office building for what proved to be a final White House decision precipitated by the kids' actions: could all those manila envelopes containing the thousands of letters addressed to President Reagan be accepted *without additional postage*? Yes, they could, and the kids loaded up Mr. Buckler and two of their own with dozens of packed manila envelopes, for delivery into the building.

All the kids met on Pennsylvania Avenue, for a sidewalk supper of hot soup and bread, one of half a dozen meals prepared for them by the Washington peace community. It was as cold now as it had been at 8 in the morning. They didn't linger when the soup was finished.

So the letters went out of the kids' hands, into the hands of the president's unknown proxies. If the civics lessons the kids learn in school are sound, they had succeeded in quietly putting their one drop in the bucket. They went home satisfied that they had.

Postscript. Just a month after their day in front of the White


So please try to stop the competition who can make more weapons and who has more power to be able to kill everyone.
Please try to understand my concern. Please care, that's the least you can do.
Sincerly yours,
Tanya Birenbaum
age, 11

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House, the children received a letter from President Reagan in which he expressed his regret at the difficulty they encountered in trying to deliver to the White House the many letters they had gathered. He went on to say that no one in this country wants to prevent nuclear war as much as he does, and that the government is working to strengthen our defenses, which he considers to be essential to the preservation of peace. At the same time, he continued, "we must begin to find ways to bring about verifiable reductions in armaments, so that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union will represent a threat to the other." The children have decided to launch a second-letter-writing campaign (closing date for sending letters to CCND, Box 550, R.D.I, Plainfield, Vt. 05667: June 1, 1982). The trickle of letters coming in since the end of the first campaign gives them a headstart of over one thousand letters.

Screen

RAGS TO REVOLUTION

HISTORY & THE ROMANTIC VISION

IT NEVER FAILS. The more money that's spent on a movie, the less worthwhile it is. At least it can be said of *Ragtime* that it manages to be a good entertainment. *Reds* isn't even that. To me Hollywood gossip is just a lot of static on the sound track of history, but I understand that Diane Keaton and Warren Beatty were an "item" while Beatty was making *Reds*. Maybe that explains why he took so long with this film, why he agonized over it so much. Certainly nothing about the film itself could explain it.

There is a point in the movie when John Reed (Beatty) has just returned from covering the Democratic National Convention at which Woodrow Wilson was nominated. A group of his friends, fellow radicals and journalists, including Louise Bryant (Keaton), gather around as Reed starts expatiating on whether Wilson can be trusted to keep America out of the war in Europe. But just as Reed is warming to his subject, Max Eastman (Edward Herrmann) cuts him off with a joke: "Never mind what Wilson said, Jack. What was he wearing?" Reed may not have taken Eastman seriously, but Beatty did. Diane Keaton looking frolicsome in a floppy hat. Diane Keaton looking indomitable in a fur hat. Diane Keaton looking *tragique* in a babushka. This movie isn't really about the romance between John Reed and Louise Bryant, but something far less significant, far less engaging: the romance that Beatty found in Keaton.

Have you taken a look lately at Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World?* It's pretty tough sledding. It begins with over ten pages of "Notes and Explanations" just so the reader can tell the Socialist Revolutionary Party from the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, and the Yedinstvo from the Maximalists. The Russian Revolution had more factions than a Russian novel has characters, and Reed could tell them all apart. More than that, he was absolutely passionate about the differences among them, as he was about all the political issues of the day that he covered. He had an extraordinary capacity to be as committed to facts and distinctions as he was to ideology. It was what made him a great journalist.

Beatty has a somewhat different approach to history. As part of his own research, he went looking for all kinds of people who knew Bryant and Reed, and with those he could find, he did interviews, which he filmed. At some point he decided to use these in the movie itself, perhaps to give it that air of authenticity it otherwise lacks. He took so long to make the film that some of those interviewed — George Jessel, Will Durant, Henry Miller, *et al.* — have since died. This makes *Reds* into something of an historical artifact itself. Yet none of the people interviewed, most of whom are accomplished and famous in their own right, is identified in the movie. Each appears on the right-hand side of a black seamless backdrop, and each has his or her reminiscence cut into sequences that parallel everyone else's. At one point, for instance, many of the interviewees say, one right after the other, that they can't really remember those days anymore. I think that the effect intended is to make all these people into one person, a kind of historical Everyman, as if the past were speaking to us with a single voice in this movie.

That's a very simple-minded, romantic concept of history, but then this is a simple-minded, romantic movie. Some-

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where in the back of Beatty's mind there is an idea that Bryant and Reed's story can be equated with the story of the Revolution. Along with its triumph over Russia came the triumph of their love. This is the Simultaneous-Orgasm Theory of History. (Those interested only in Beatty's historical thinking can leave at the film's intermission, by which time his theory has been fully developed.) One can't help suspecting that Reed and Bryant's relationship wasn't really as it is depicted here. Surely what they talked about, argued about, and finally shared were all the intricacies of current events and politics that are either glossed over or omitted in the film. The real Jack Reed could never have been sidetracked like Beatty by a snide remark from Max Eastman, or anyone else. Judging by *Ten Days That Shook the World,* Reed talked about politics nonstop. You couldn't shut him up. He was incapable of thinking about anything else. He was consumed. *That* is what must have exasperated Louise Bryant, if anything did. In the movie Reed is, around Bryant, the same kind of tongue-tied numbskull that Beatty played in *Shampoo*. His obsession with journalism and politics is suggested only by his frequent departures.

Beatty's romantic vision ultimately reduces Reed and Bryant's story to clichés, such as the scene where he tries to make her a dinner without knowing how to cook. This is the easiest kind of kitsch comedy. If it weren't for John Reed's legend, or maybe Warren Beatty's, no one would give a movie with this kind of material in it a moment's consideration. How trivial Beatty's approach makes Reed's story can be seen from the fate that befalls Emma Goldman (Maureen Stapleton). Her historical role as an ideologue and feminist is eclipsed here by her bitchiness toward Bryant. The implication is that because Reed found Bryant attractive, Goldman felt so much resentment toward her that it at once undermined all Goldman's principles. Only when Bryant turns up in Russia searching for Reed does Goldman relent a bit, seeing how truly devoted to Reed Bryant is. In this portrayal of Goldman, as elsewhere in *Reds,* Beatty has peered into the depths of history and seen a single, overwhelming truth, that Love Conquers All. The very foundations of history quake at the thought.

From the movie version of *Ragtime,* Emma Goldman has been omitted altogether. Michael Weller's screenplay omits other historical characters as well—Henry Ford, J.P. Morgan, Harry Houdini, and Commodore Perry, for example. But there are still lots of characters left over from E.L. Doctorow's novel to make an amusing movie. Rhinelander Waldo (James Cagney), the New York Police commissioner, is still in, as is Booker T. Washington (Moses Gunn). So are Stanford White (Norman Mailer), and Evelyn Nesbitt (Elizabeth McGovern) and Harry K. Thaw (Robert Joy), Nesbitt's husband who shot White in a jealous rage. Still here, too, are the anonymous characters of fiction with whom Doctorow peopled the early days of the century: Father (James Olson), Mother (Mary Steenburgen), Younger Brother (Brad Dourif), and of course Coalhouse Walker (Howard E. Rollins) and his wife (Debbie Allen). What allows *Ragtime* to succeed where *Reds* fails is that there are so many characters. We don't dwell on any two long enough to become disenchanted with them, to notice their superficialities and inadequacies. Their quality of caricature is the key to their success.

Milos Forman's movie, like Doctorow's novel, deals as lightly with history as it does with human relationships. On the one hand, Doctorow had a BIG ambition. He wanted to write the *Les Misérables* of the twentieth century, to be our Victor Hugo. On the other hand, he realized that no one today could pull off, straight-faced, an historic epic full of all the philosophizing and improbable coincidence, the chance crossing of characters' paths, that Hugo invented. (Between us and Hugo stands Flaubert's sober calling-to-account of the novel.) So Doctorow moderated his ambition with humor. He wrote a parody of Hugo that is as entertaining as it is inconsequential. Who knows what wonders, or disasters, Robert Altman would

Richard J. Burke

Shagbark Hickory

"Recall me things," said the nut by the couch,
"and we'll ease the pain in your eye."

Pain to him but a razorblade to me
So I unwound my 16mm. memory:

Little Missus Grey, whose weight was in ounces
in her ancient store at Herkimer and Arkansas,
Cranking a coffee grinder for dear life
As the wheel threatened to fling her to some kind of
assumption.

I sang my boyhood on a wooden root-cellar door
With Tim and Dan for Old Lady Carroll's spangle
of bright pennies;
On the bricks to our back we cut names
with nails. "Mary", "Beth" and "Hannah."
"Mary" was mine and she stayed longer in the brick.

"Recall me more," he said.
I monkeyed another reel on my memorizer:
Who would block the way of two black nuns blackly
flowing?
Not I. None of us would and scrambled down the old
wooden
walk and over the fence of Walsh's yard.
No wonder he kept us out.
He had his own green patch of Eden.
Plus Saturday sins. The poplar stump had blood-rust
to tell tales of Sunday dinners innumerable times.

"Any more?" he asked
and I rose up and said:
"Matinees are on Saturday." And left.

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have worked with Doctorow's story, had not Dino De Laurentis taken the project away from him? Forman is, like Doctorow, a man of more modest, sure-fire talent. He and scriptwriter Weller have made a movie very much in keeping with the spirit of the original novel. They have made a movie equivalent of what used to be called "a good read." That's more than can be said for *Reds*, and this does, perhaps, make it worth saying after all. COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

FLAUBERT & FREUD & THE SCARSDALE DIET DOCTOR

Mrs. Trilling's Mrs. Harris

SAUL MALOFF

FOR DIANA TRILLING to evoke the immortal ghosts of Emma Bovary and Anna Karenina in her book of meditations on Jean Harris* is not only natural, it is inevitable. Suicide conferred on the fictional characters — what? — stature, significance, dignity, transcendent reality, splendor even, a kind of magnificence which neither possesses in the imagined "life" of the great novels and both acquired only through death. Otherwise, both would have died of ennui and inanition, and we along with them: we are unable to imagine an interesting ongoing life for them.

And so it is with Jean Harris: she came to our attention through the passionate murder she committed, and immediately we transformed her into a version of that figure out of melodrama or tabloid — the wronged woman betrayed finally beyond endurance by her wanton lover, one time too many. The cast of characters seemed almost contrived, so perfectly typed were they: the rich, powerful lover (in dull actuality, the fickle bounder Dr. Herman Tarnover, a cardiologist in the wonderfully named gold-coast town of Purchase in Westchester, rich as carriage-trade "specialists" are rich, and suddenly fallen upon a fortune as nominal author of the then-fashionable "Complete Scarsdale Medical Diet"); Mrs. Harris, the aging mistress of fast-fading prettiness; Lynne Tryforos, the "younger woman" and triumphant rival. Alive they were nothing — the headmistress of an expensive horsey boarding school for expensive horsey girls; a pricey physician of vulgar social pretensions living far beyond his intellectual and moral means; the "other" woman, something of a looker with, one surmises, designs of her own, venal as well as amatory. The death in Purchase that night in 1980 lifted them from the obscurity of a depressing suburban triangle into, if not exactly a state of grace, then at least the territory over which the imagination is sovereign: the provinces of fiction.

Did Mrs. Harris murder Hi Tarnower? Did she set out on that fatal day from her house at the Madeira School in Virginia and drive six hours through the gathering darkness armed with an automatic and enough rounds to kill most of the cardiologists in Westchester County for the premeditated purpose of shooting dead the heartless trifler she had come to hate? Or did she drive all that distance in order to punish him by killing herself in his presence? Or, failing that, induce him somehow to do it for her? Or was it all an accident — a suicide attempt gone afoul? Did she, struggling for possession of the gun with the man for whom she protested undiminished love to the bitter end, after she'd been tried, convicted, sentenced — did she "accidentally" riddle him with bullets and flee into the night in quest of help, so she said, thinking him only superficially injured as he lay bleeding to death?

Frankie and Johnnie are already embalmed in folklore; by now yet another crime of passion, another Saturday night shooting, scarcely arouses more than passing interest if any; we are connoisseurs of slaughter, we are surfeited with death, our jaded appetites require bloodbaths, mass murder, something special in the way of delicious horror — Atlanta, the Los Angeles Freeway, the subterranean necropolises in Chicago, Texas, the California citrus groves. But these were only careless children or migrant workers or fools or homosexuals, black, drifters, shiftless, a worthless or at best a readily replaceable lot. And here we had something big, clearly worth a running front-page story and prime-time television: a lordly doctor and world-traveler who though nearing seventy played tennis and golf, fished for trout and salmon, hunted big game on African safari, "wrote" a (the magical word) bestselling, world-famous guide to the taming of carnal appetite toward the end of physical beauty and eternal youth; and his lady of many years, a stylish Wasp of impeccable middleclass background, Midwestern, "good" private schools, then Smith College (*magna cum laude* in Economics, 1946), schoolmistressing in expensive private schools in the imperial Detroit suburb of Grosse Pointe and mothering two sons before divorcing her husband and going on to more splendid prospects. Such people may otherwise despoil life but they do not kill, and they are not killed; on the whole unremarkable in life, they mesmerized us in consequence of the lethal act. Death — the notable artist death — made "characters" of them. Or potential ones: in the glare of notoriety they began to stir toward the focus, the concentration and magnitudes of art, he in death, she in her sudden, surprising celebrity, though the "other woman," largely because she never appeared in court nor did she in any direct way participate in the trial, remains a shadowy figure (yet we feel from what we know of her that we know her well enough). Jean Harris — as "Mrs. Harris," the titular heroine of her own life — drifts through

* *Mrs. Harris: The Death of the Scarsdale Diet Doctor*. By Diana Trilling. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $14.95, 352 pp.

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the grim and melancholy tale like some ghost seeking embodiment—in fact like a character in search of an author.

Diana Trilling is a novelist manquée who found what she was looking for as she sat in the Westchester courtroom day after day of the long and (until Mrs. Harris took the stand in order to justify herself and confound her adversaries; attained instant "stardom"; assured her own conviction-as-charged) mostly tedious trial having to do with trajectories of bullets, the anatomical origin of bits of skin (Tarnower's), ballistics, arcane legalisms, and other piffling attractions.

Whodunit was never at issue; what actually happened was of minor interest; intent seemed perfectly apparent; motive — the wellspring of action — was sufficient to the bursting point, torrential and universally known since the expulsion from the Garden or soon after.

MRS. TRILLING'S interest in Mrs. Harris is not lawyerly and it isn't journalistic. It is novelistic and is closely related to the procedures of literary criticism. At the outset, she felt, as most women (and I daresay men) felt, a sisterly (and fraternal) feeling for the woman; but Mrs. Harris, she found, wasn't easy to love, did not invite affection and sympathy, indeed could be offputting, harsh, arrogant, contemptuous. In any event, Mrs. Trilling's feelings toward her subject grew, as the imagined "novel" developed in the dull, suffocating world of the courthouse in White Plains, steadily more complicated, complex, filled with ambiguity.

As for the events themselves, whoever doubted their general structure? Matters of due process and the subtleties of law aside, who among us does not know as surely and despairingly as we know the darker recesses of our own hearts and minds, always excepting the angelic among us who know nothing of rage, loathing, and kindred ancestral passion. Mrs. Harris, as she saw and suffered it, had given the scoundrel the best years of her life and what did she get in return?

SAUL MALOFF, *a novelist and critic whose most recent book is* Heartland, *is a regular contributor to* Commonweal.

Scorn. Abuse. Neglect. Humiliation. Insult heaped on indignity. Public ridicule. Discarded as trash for trash, garbage — her kindest word for the other woman. That rank womanizer had lain about once too often, she told the police in a careless moment on the night of the murder, before she began to build her improbable and certainly implausible defense. Over a long time, perhaps for years, perhaps since the beginning of their fated union, or near it, the venom gathered in dank pools, drop by drop by drop, until it poisoned her. And so, feeling, as she was to say, "old," "bitter," "sick," "ugly," she got her gun and enough rounds to fire as often as she had no doubt done in her murderous fantasies and got into her car and set out to kill the sonofabitch. Where's the mystery? Who can fail to understand her in her (and his) blood and bones? And he was a sonofabitch most foul; and if we can for a moment or two desist from proclaiming ringingly the supreme value of all human life, we might even imagine it possible for persons not utterly depraved to think his departure a good riddance or at least not to feel inconsolable grief. One can imagine such emotion effortlessly; the point is we do not respond to the event as "real" but rather as fiction, not as life but as art even if bad art, a lurid paperback novel, and at that distance we are certainly not displeased when the villain gets his. In the life of the imagination we are bloodyminded hangmen, implacable in meting out just desserts and taking some pleasure in doing so.

But that of course is not the book Mrs. Trilling wants to write. The fiction she aspires to is Flaubertian and Tolstoyan; the analytic instruments she wields are Freudian and Jamesean; she deals in nothing but the best. She is interested in manners, taste, values, tones of voice, and shades of meaning, the hum and buzz of implication. Having seen — or peered through windows at — the brassy vulgarity of Tarnower's Westchester "estate" with its bad statuary and trite "gardens" and the house with its mean interiors and (this is scarcely credible but so little about gold coasts anywhere is) "trophy room" with the mounted heads of slaughtered beasts actually staring down at the guests assembled for their host's little "gourmet" dinners — having seen the kitsch and showy display of his life, Mrs. Trilling is ready to dismiss the diet doctor summarily as a noisome, flat, monochromatic character in the drama. And when you add to his atrocious bad taste and vile sexual manners, what is even worse, his repellent best seller, swollen to book proportions by a professional hack with some considerable assistance from Mrs. Harris, from the original two-page digest prepared for his patients, well, on aesthetic grounds alone he deserved nothing less than the guillotine. For the sin of committing stylistic solecisms and other barbarisms of taste, to the gallows! For pandering to the lewd popular appetite for dietbooks, let him be dismembered! (My own sentiments exactly, let me confess.) Having disposed of him, Mrs. Trilling makes no serious attempt at posthumous reconstruction of the man who, say what you will, gave his life so that Mrs. Harris might live forever in the annals of literature.

It is upon her and no one else that the focus narrows. But Mrs. Trilling's interest is so special, so selective, so narrow, so unremitting within the self-imposed limits, that she did not see the need as a mere journalist would surely have done, to go out there to the uncharted West and have a look at little Jean Struven's Shaker Heights, Ohio; to inquire a little more closely into her family of origin, about whom we learn next to nothing; certainly to have a long look at Grosse Pointe, the scene of her marriage, the first phase of her career as an educator (of the children of the automobile moguls), or the years following her divorce from James Harris. We learn nothing about her college

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years, nothing about Harris, what it must have been like for a woman of her vitality, intelligence, ambition — of her contemptuous arrogance and overwhelming pride — to have spent so many years as an upper servant (that is, as teacher and indeed as headmistress) to the presumptive heiresses of the very rich. Much of this can be translated into hard, factual information of the sort a biographer and psychobiographer would require, as would the kind of novelist Mrs. Trilling pays homage to. Ibsen once said that though no reference or allusion to the antecedent life of a character need be made in the drama itself, he himself knew every day and every event of it, internal and external, and in fact made a point of writing out detailed sketches in his notebooks as a way of filling his mind for the work about to be undertaken. This density of knowledge, this direct, intimate relation to the detritus of life, which is one of the chief jobs of the "traditional" novel, is almost wholly absent from Mrs. Trilling's meditations: it is as though Mrs. Harris had been born that night in Purchase and burst into the repleteness of her being only at the time of her trial and especially when she at last occupied the center of her world's attention on the witness stand — when she attained at long last what had eluded her until then: "star quality," as her chronicler says.

MRS. TRILLING, as one would expect of her, is very good at noticing a hundred details of which novels are made: dress, carriage, countenance, hair, clothes, voice, accent, modulation, tics and gestures, range of expression facial and verbal; but although they are essential to the "novel" of which Mrs. Harris is the central figure, they are not sufficient to give us the author of the long, seething letter to Tarnower (the central, decisive document in the case, and the rope by which she hanged herself). Written to Tarnower on the eve of her last trip, mailed but never received, filled with a palpable hatred and fury which she persisted in denying, whether disingenuously or deviously we cannot know. At this level of observation Mrs. Trilling also misses some golden opportunities, surprisingly: failing to notice, for example, that Mrs. Harris's sense of T.S. Eliot was of the shallow, anthology sort when it wasn't simply foolish and overreaching, an unearned claim to high culture; or her failure to see for what it was her subject's wide-eyed, breathless pronouncement that the diet doctor read Herodotus "for fun" (whether in Greek or English we are not told): a crude joke which neither she nor Tarnower could possibly have understood.

But Mrs. Trilling is really interested not so much in Mrs. Harris's actual lived life as in her unconscious fantasies. Like her late husband, Lionel Trilling, whose work in this area, as in others, was justly celebrated, she is a Freudian; but she is also an unreconstructed, not to say primitive, Freudian of the kind not always very different from a formidably bright undergraduate afire from a first reading of "The Interpretation of Dreams" and "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life" — and this, bewilderingly, directly alongside subtle, wonderfully deft psychological and moral analysis, truly illuminating seeing into her elusive, complex subject. At times, Mrs. Trilling reduces the modes and procedures of clinical analysis to farce — a parody of a parody.

A brief scattering of examples must suffice. Mrs. Harris, we are told, was revolted by the night she spent in the (superbly named) Valhalla Jail, mainly because she'd been cast among whores who littered the cell-floor with "bloody sanitary pads" although, Mrs. Trilling immediately remarks, "this may have been a cover memory for a suppressed recollection of the blood that had been spilled in Dr. Tarnower's bedroom. . . ." Why, yes; but on the other hand it may not have been a "cover memory" at all, or certainly not for an event which she almost certainly would not have cast beyond consciousness into the abyss, if she cast it anywhere at all. A bloody pad is a bloody pad; and even for those of us who do not shrink from the sight, bloody pads do not necessarily compose a delightful and edifying spectacle, especially on jailhouse floors. If it must be a "cover memory," why not for the ordeal of parturition (her own as preternaturally mature newborn infant of prodigious memory, or as mother)? Or for the (conceivably) traumatic onset of her own menstrual rites of passage? Or for the crisis, if it was that, of her own menopause? The possibilities are psychologically, emotionally reverberant, and (so it seems to me) the least likely and certainly the least interesting of them is the one Mrs. Trilling proposes.

Or take another example. Unless it is immutably true that a phallic symbol, as a distinguished American poet and wit once despairingly remarked, is anything

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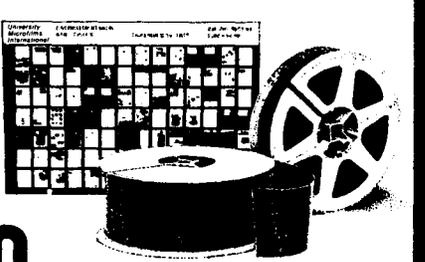

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that's longer than it is wide, then surely, surely, we can leave some figurative equations to writers of trashy fiction, if we can't, out of respect for the First Amendment, simply outlaw them; and surely the first of these is the smoking phallic gun so famous among sophomores by means of which Mrs. Harris "too, poor insufficient woman, became capable of assault. She was supplied with what she'd been deprived of by biology." Tarnower's being a Jew was important to Mrs. Harris (I think) but not (I think) because she endowed him with mythic "sexual exoticism" promising "meta-sexual fulfillment," as Mrs. Trilling believes, supplanting truly interesting possibilities for the fiction-making imagination with banal ones. But it is drearily consistent with a posited "female castration anxiety" gnawing at the lady's innards, if I may so speak. Author and subject never met to speak in the courtroom and never outside it (actually, Mrs. Harris, once spotting the author in the press section, complimented her for a review she'd seen somewhere); so unless all women are so afflicted as a matter of biological fate, the analyst must deduce that exotic anxiety from the character's gait, arch of eyebrow, turn of phrase — how else? Or from metaphor, as when Mrs. Harris, attempting to capture in language her sense of utter void, spoke of herself as sitting in an empty chair — a sense that overpowers me at this moment as I sit reflecting upon Mrs. Trilling's strange, willful, mischievous reading of a striking image. Rather like charging Nietzsche with voyeurism when he spoke of "gazing into the abyss" (until it gazed back at him). Freudian fundamentalism of this order will not do.

Better to throw up one's hands. "People," Mrs. Trilling finally concedes, "aren't solved." Exactly. Only in bad novels.

Books: HOW TO RATIONALIZE MEANNESS

EQUALITY, THE THIRD WORLD, AND ECONOMIC DELUSION

P. T. Bauer

Harvard University, $17.50, 293 pp.

Michael Harrington

THIS is the most irritating book I have read in a long time, and it invites a reviewer to be as arrogant, ideological, and contemptuous of opponents as it is. P. T. Bauer, as his title tells us, is going to deal with the "economic delusion" of scholars and policymakers, "the conspicuous and disconcerting hiatus between accepted opinion and evident reality in major areas of academic and public economic discourse since the Second World War." Therefore he poses the problem of explaining how "patently invalid or bizarre notions" gain such power.

I will not reply in kind, not the least because I hope that a tone of calm criticism will better persuade the reader that most—but not all—of this book is a repetition of the stalest clichés of conservative economics. There are occasional insights in *Equality, the Third World, and Economic Delusion*: some of the attacks on oversimplifications about the third world are persuasive, and discussion of the careless use of the concept, investment, is worthwhile though it should be sent to Ronald Reagan, Arthur Laffer, and Jack Kemp rather than to anyone on the left. But honesty quickly inhibits charity and I have run out of Bauer's virtues already. Let me proceed then to a critical assessment of three areas of his analysis: his theory of why stupid ideas have influence; his soapbox attack on equality; and his attempt to show that not global poverty but the third world and its sympathizers in advanced countries constitute a central international problem.

First why do preposterous ideas, i.e. those Bauer opposes, dominate our intellectual and political life? Bauer's response is that most tattered theory of neoconservatism: the New Class did it. Or as Bauer rephrases the old saw, "the political nation" of "public servants, writers, mediamen, academics, teachers, and at times some churchmen and entertainers" is responsible. And the reason is, as usual, that these people promote policies which enhance "their emotional, political, and material interests."

That theory is patently absurd with regard to the 1950s, had a shallow plausibility in the sixties and early seventies, and is embarrassingly irrelevant at a time when a counter-class with the same sociological profile as the New Class, is helping to impose the most ideological and rightist administration in twentieth-century history on our country. How can Bauer put such an idea in his first chapter at a time when Brookings is down and American Enterprise up and authors for *Commentary*, like himself, are read in the White House? True, many of these chapters were written in the mid-seventies when it was permissible, but not particularly perceptive, to hold such a theory. But two of them first appeared in 1980 and the entire volume, we are assured, has been revised for 1981 publication.

After presenting this thesis—which, one is tempted to say, is "patently invalid"—Mr. Bauer proceeds to an attack on equality. Income differences, he argues, are to be explained by talent and initiative, or the lack of it. Incomes, Bauer continues, are normally "produced by their recipients and the resources they own. . . ." Now it is certainly true that there are a few individuals who amass large fortunes within their lives—and truer that inheritance is not only a surer, but a much more pervasive, source of income and wealth. That Bauer would disagree with a maverick like Lester Thurow, who in his *Generating Inequality* showed that great fortunes were, most of the time, the result of a "random walk," is to be expected (though he does not mention Thurow or most other serious students of the issue in making his

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magisterial pronouncements about it). He doesn't even comment on Frank Knight's statement that inheritance and luck are both more important than effort in the accumulation of riches. Indeed, he doesn't even cite the Scottish radical, Adam Smith, who made much the same point more than two hundred years ago.

In short, Bauer's discussion of inequality within the advanced economies is ideological and unserious when measured by a scholarly standard. So are his attacks on the third world. Since this is the area in which the conservatives in Washington need ideological rationales to buttress their instinctive meanness, it is the one in which Bauer's work is having the most pernicious effect. Secretary Haig's UN speech in September echoed many of Bauer's ideas.

To begin with, Bauer constantly focuses on a straw man: a theorist who says that all of the poverty and misery of the third world has been caused by Western colonialism. Wrong, he answers. The West has actually been an agency of material progress in the third world. That is both right and irrelevant to the serious debate. Of course it was imperialism and colonialism which shook those societies out of their traditional inertia; of course that impulse resulted in a degree of modernization and production (Karl Marx overemphasized these points a century ago). But the real argument—made by economists for UNCTAD, by Gunnar Myrdal, dependency theorists, and a host of others—is that the resulting gains were skewed and misshaped to meet Western priorities and created a system which institutionalized maldistribution of global wealth. With a few exceptions—and one of them, as we will see shortly, involves a misrepresentation—Bauer does not deal with his difficult opponents but only with the simplifiers among them and non-existent straw men.

At times his zeal in this enterprise leads him to what could be called "bizarre notions." Example: "Foreign aid is perhaps the least questioned form of state spending in the West. It is never questioned in principle. It is often criticized on the grounds that it is insufficient." Oh yes, "in the United States there is some sporadic and rather ineffective criticism of aid which does not affect mainstream discussion at all and official policy not much either." That presumably explains why the OECD powers' economic aid declined from 0.51 percent of GNP in 1960 to 0.37 percent in 1980—and why the United States percentage in that period dropped from 0.53 percent to 0.27 percent.

Moreover, Bauer argues, foreign aid is bad for the third world anyway. If an investment in a poor country is a sound one, it can be financed by money markets; but official aid is not subject to such constraints and therefore is often wasted. Now there is *some* truth to the second part of that thesis, but it is limited, and the first part is utterly ideological and non-empirical. In one place Bauer assures us—he is arguing against the idea that the terms of trade in the postwar period have, with an exception or two, been negative—that "the West cannot prescribe international prices. These prices are the outcome of innumerable individual decisions of market participants." A little later on, the polemical purpose has shifted and now Bauer is trying to explain why business and labor have pushed so hard (!) for foreign aid. It is, he says, a "self-protection racket" in which those groups try to buy off criticism of their protectionist policies. Those policies are presented as if they are mainly recent; in fact, the Kennedy Round of the sixties reduced protection between affluent powers but did little to stop it when it had its impact on the poor.

But Bauer's normal assumption is that there is a classic free-enterprise flow of capital around the world. A somewhat more realistic assessment can be found in the 1981 World Development Report of the World Bank. The oil exporters invest their monies in the advanced oil importers, leaving the poor oil importers at a loss which is theoretically compensated for by the latter's access to advanced markets—which is, however, limited by protectionism and reduced in recent years by the shoddy performance of the advanced economies. That description is much closer to reality than Bauer's.

But then there are occasions when *Equality, the Third World, and Economic Delusion* becomes even more

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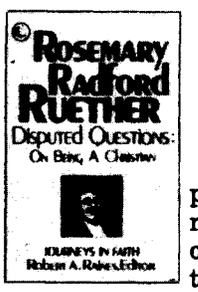
Disputed Questions

On Being A Christian

by Rosemary Radford Ruether



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questionable. Bauer quite rightly remarks that, in the third world, the distinction between consumption and investment is not the same as in the first world. In poor countries, Bauer holds, "consumption promotes improved economic performance. . . ." Very true and very important, as Gunnar Myrdal pointed out at great length and with remarkable theoretical sophistication in *Asian Drama*. Yet Bauer attacks Myrdal for ignoring the very theory he did so much to establish and asserts that his own (Bauer's) insight—which is warmed-over Myrdal—is "largely ignored in the mainstream literature of development and planning."

One could go on. Vicious attacks on Julius Nyerere and Tanzania are "documented" by references to a series of newspaper and magazine articles in the mid-seventies, but there is no mention of Cranford Pratt's scholarly study of that country which appeared around the same time. The methodology of *Equality, the Third World, and Economic Delusion* is, in short, that of an intellectual street fighter rather than of a scholar. Since Mr. Bauer does this while arrogantly presenting himself as Diogenes among the blind, one can only hope that the gods still punish *hubris*.

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Thrilling project, old-fashioned account

TOWARDS A WORLD THEOLOGY
Wilfred Cantwell Smith
Westminster Press, $18.95, 206 pp.

Ivan Strenski

ASIDE from their forays into the mission field, theologians have primarily busied themselves with issues internal to their own communities — abortion, birth control, christology, etc. When things get ecumenical they tend to stray no farther than Jerusalem or Istanbul, leaving Benares, Kyoto, Mecca, Moscow, or Qum for the history of religions. Thus "theology" really ought to be read "*Christian* theology"; in its present state, "theology" is just about as much theology-in-general — *world* theology — as the World Series is a *world* series. Not much — at least if Havana, Caracas, Mexico City, and Tokyo have anything to say about it.

So when Wilfred Cantwell Smith, director of Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions and both theologian and historian of religion, urges readers to consider the task of a "world theology," some Christians will perk up their ears to this timely program. With so much narrow and cultish, jerry-built falderal fouling the electro-theological atmosphere, Smith's generous cosmopolitanism lets in the fresh air of liberal civility. No small achievement, even if we have much less than a finished theology here, but rather certain steps taken *toward* one.

Smith speaks from an unselfconsciously and confessedly pious Christian heart about his own faith to others of like hearts and minds. *Towards a World Theology* is written for churchfolk. In fact, it was spoken for churchfolk as the Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham, England, thus perhaps accounting for the mannered, chatty, senior common-room style in which it is written. One too many Victorian lampshades gathers dust in this book: "fond dreams!" comes to mind on page 181. (England has a funny way of doing things to American — here Canadian — intellectuals.) But at least the effort seems to be in a noble cause. Smith wants to liven up things in the study of world religions: instead of the static-sounding "religion," we ought to speak of certain historical "processes." The life of "faith" requires creative participation in the history of a "community in motion"; the study of that historical life requires just as much determination to apply the right method of study. Resist abstract language and brutal categorization. The history of religions stands in the midst of a confluence of "processes." For Smith these processes are irreducibly made up of other people, working out the dictates of their personal faith. Mobility reigns; growth surges forth. The prospect is thrilling — at least on the surface.

Yet how true to history is Smith's picture of the way we "have all along been participants in the world history of religion; although we did not know it"? Trace the diffusion of the rosary across Asia from India to Japan and from the Middle East to Europe and the Americas, Smith urges. Follow the common threads in the Tolstoy-Gandhi-Martin Luther

MICHAEL HARRINGTON's *most recent book is* The Next America *(Holt Rhinehart).*

IVAN STRENSKI *is chairman of the religious studies department at Connecticut College.*

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King connection; carry them back to the story of the bodhisattva, later transformed into the Orthodox Christian legend of Saints Barlaam and Josaphat. Then you will see how our various religious "processes" have intersected to the mutual benefit of one and all. Well, yes, true enough; but pretty marginal as far as serious participations in world history go. Still, maybe these feeble precedents are better than none at all. If Smith wants to encourage real red-blooded participation in the religious history of humanity in the present day, we well need *some* precedents — even if they may seem a trifle pale.

But even if we may not really have been so seriously involved with the religious histories of other folk, we can at least applaud Smith's attack on abstract language and objectivist methods of studying what he insists are deeply human things. On the surface, this may look fine, again, but up close Smith seems to draw dangerously close to a tradition partly responsible for the present parochial malaise. Smith, like many other religious people and scholars, makes a fetish of personal experience and faith. For him, public objects, like "religion" are invariably squalid, while private objects, like "personal faith" are wonderfully splendid. But we have had more than enough of this sort of retreat into the private world. It is there to see every Sunday morning beamed in from Tulsa, Oklahoma, or Lynchburg, Virginia. More fetishes from the feeling hearts of the faithful. How Smith's approach will get us out of that dead-end, we never learn in this volume. Indeed, when he says "the Muslim has been saved by Muslim faith, . . . the Buddhist by Buddhist faith, the Jew by Jewish," he invites Tulsa and Lynchburg to put in their claims. A double-edged sword, perhaps; but just who is going to get cut?

Now I do not sneer at Smith's efforts here to generate some of that liberal tolerance and civility so badly needed in certain quarters. I simply doubt — these days at any rate — that we can achieve this by well-meant appeals to personal faith. I am uneasy because this book is in many ways doggedly, yes, even radically old-fashioned. (Not a bad thing in itself.) How can a book presume to address critical issues on the world scene without, for instance, giving serious attention to the critiques (of experience as a ground of authority, in this case) of Freud and Marx, to mention only two figures of this sort? Freud merits *one* line in *Towards a World Theology* — and then he has to share it with Darwin and Marx! Whatever the final outcome of Smith's encounter with Freud, Marx, Durkheim, Levi-Strauss, and all the others, all bets are off on Smith until he comes to public terms with these makers of twentieth-century thinking. It is small wonder then that Smith lectures us that we "must" recognize that "all human knowledge is self-consciousness" and that it is flatly "immoral" not to accept this! This writer struggles at the end of his persuasive tether, beating us into guilty submission to a warmed-over, question-begging humanism.

In Brief

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM: THE MASS LEFT IN ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES, *Edited by Bogden Denitch. Allanheld, Osmun and Co., $26, 180 pp.*

The Mitterrand victory has renewed scholarly interest in the study of the democratic left in Europe, and corresponds happily with the publication of this book of essays devoted to an examination of recent developments in socialism, both thematically and in specific countries.

The study as a whole is less than the sum of its parts; the individual articles, often interesting, do not present an integrated and coherent picture, nor are they aimed at the same kind of audience. The problem is chronic to edited works but not insuperable; it can be avoided by careful delineation of the subject and planning the articles around certain predetermined questions.

Some articles are good, like Nancy Lieber's terse, analytical account of French socialist foreign policy, others are jargon-laden or banal. The title of "The Modernizing Role at the Working-Class Parties in Southern Europe" is deceptive; the article actually concentrates on the role of intellectuals in the Italian Communist Party "Party, Class, and State: A Leninist and a Non-Leninist View" compares the approaches of Lenin and, as non-Leninist, Eugene Debs. "Some Obstacles in Building a Mass Socialist Left in the United States" does not cut the Gordian knot.

One might even question the fundamental assumption of the book, that there *is* such a thing as Eurosocialism. Granted that French socialism is full of vitality, but is the same true of Scandinavia, Italy, Belgium? English socialism seems committed to self-destruction. For the moment, it's only *ex Gallia lux.*

STEVEN PHILIP KRAMER

Correspondence

(Continued from page 66)

marks the modern world. *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness* concludes with these words: "Discovering what we are and acknowledging what we are has never been easy for human beings. It is always an ongoing project. This book is intended as a contribution to our unfinished business." The book is not simply about sociobiology but, I hope, about us all.

(REV.) WALTER J. ONG, S.J.
University Professor of Humanities
Professor of Humanities in Psychiatry
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New York, NY

To the Editors: In your issue of december 4, it was stated that *Christ: The Experience Of Jesus As Lord* by Edward Schillebeeckx is published by the Seabury Press. The publisher of this book as well as the other major works of Schillebeeckx is, in fact, The Crossroad Publishing Company. Among the other titles by Schillebeeckx available from Crossroad are these: *Ministry, Jesus: An Experiment In Christology* and *Interim Report on the Books Jesus & Christ.* A newly established publisher of religious, academic and general interest books, Crossroad is located at 575 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

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